

HEARTBREAK, SPIRIT, AND HOPE: LEADING A SCHOOL IN THE
THROES AND AFTERMATH OF A SCHOOL CRISIS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

AUGUST 2017

By

Donna Rea Pi‘ilani Lindsey

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Jeffrey Moniz, Chair
Dr. Veselina Lambrev
Dr. Daniel White

Keywords: School crises, decision making, autoethnography, narrative inquiry

Acknowledgements

My doctoral journey has been filled with exploration, wonder, and reflection. I am privileged to have been in the company of such knowledgeable professors and mentors, and am appreciative of their guidance and invaluable time. I would like to thank the following people for making my experience truly special.

To Dr. Jeffrey Moniz for creating a safe and welcoming space for the start of my journey. To my dear friend, Desiree Cremer, for motivating me to write and to believe in what I wrote. To Dr. Daniel White for the gift of context and stories of leadership and life. To Dr. Veselina Lambrev for exemplifying humility and bravery as a researcher, and to Dr. Sarah Twomey for elevating my journey and future travels with the essence of beauty, love, courage, and a sense of place.

I am deeply grateful to my loved ones for supporting my relentless dedication and desire to teach and lead. Thank you to my parents, Stemo and Mary Jean Lindsey, for giving me the reigns to pursue my dreams and being touchstones for unconditional love and immeasurable faith. To my children, Leah Sanchez and Ko'olau Feltman, for understanding why I do what I do and sharing me with so many other children. To my sister, Kupu, for listening to my words—spoken and written, when it matters the most. To my biggest fan, Mark Feltman, for encouraging me to do something for myself when leaving was easier than leading.

Learning and growing alongside my fellow cohorts leave me with indelible memories and new perspectives. Mahalo to Kealohi Rappun for her profound words that powered this amazing and rejuvenating journey—"I love myself when I'm learning."

Dedication

To my grandparents, Andres and Jessie Agustin, for having a clear purpose in life and living it out to its fullest. Happy 75th Wedding Anniversary, Gramps and Grams!

Abstract

Traumatic school events can be devastating, unpredictable, and complex. Therefore, underscoring the critical need to examine and conceptualize the factors that influence school leaders' decision making in the midst and aftermath of a significant school crisis. This qualitative study employs autoethnography and narrative inquiry as frameworks to research implications of three Hawai'i school leaders' decision-making based on the analysis of the participants' and author's stories told through open ended interviews. The research questions explore a school leader's (1) decision making process in response to a school crisis; (2) experience with school community members during a school crisis; (3) ethical dilemmas during a school crisis; (4) preparedness for a school crisis, and; (5) professional and personal implications in relation to their unique school crisis. Participants were purposefully selected based on their professional capacity as Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) public school leaders and experiences with a significant school crisis. Key themes emerge from the analysis of school leaders' stories that tell of their heartbreak, spirit, and hope relative to their decision-making. Findings show that the study's participants and the author identified the safety and well-being of students as primary factors that influenced their decision-making. Ethical dilemmas, school community members, and the lack of formal training also impacted their decisions. Results of this study may help to inform decision making practices of educational practitioners. It may also serve as a catalyst for establishing policies and training opportunities related to crisis preparedness, response, and recovery in order to promote school safety and increase a school leader's capacity to lead effectively through school crises.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement	3
Significance of the Study	3
Research Questions	4
Overarching Question	4
Supporting Questions	4
School Crisis Defined	4
Prologue: A Story That Begets a Story	6
The Protasis: The Miseducation of an Educator	7
Epitasis: The Spirit of an Educator	10
The Catastrophe: The Heartbreak of a School Leader	14
The Epilogue: The Hope of a School Leader	23
Chapter 2. Literature Review	26
The Context for School Crises	26
Decision Making Frameworks	29
School Leader Decision-Making During a School Crisis	32
Ethical Dilemmas of School Leaders	33
School Leaders Reflect on Crises	37

Chapter 3. Methodology	39
Context	39
Principal Character A.....	40
Principal Character B	42
Author	43
Design	45
Data Collection	45
Data Analysis	47
Credibility	48
Transferability	48
Limitations	49
Chapter 4. Findings	51
The Protasis: The Story of a School Leader	51
Principal Character A.....	51
Principal Character B.	51
Author	52
The Epitasis: The Spirit of a School Leader	52
Principal Character A.....	52
Principal Character B.	53
Author.	56
The Catastrophe: The Heartbreak of a School Leader	56
Principal Character A.....	56
Principal Character B.	58

Author.	61
The Epilogue: The Hope of a School Leader.....	64
Principal Character A.....	64
Principal Character B.	65
Author.	66
Key Themes	67
School Leaders and Decision Making	67
Decision Making Framework.....	67
Strengths.....	67
Challenges	68
Effectiveness.	69
School Community Influence on School Leaders’ Decision Making.....	69
Student	69
Parents and Community Members.....	71
Ethical Dilemmas of School Leaders’ Decision Making.....	72
Preparedness of School Leaders for Decision Making	73
Training	74
Supports.	75
Desired Supports.	76
Reflections of School Leaders’ Decision Making	76
Professional Implications	76
Personal Implications	77
Chapter 5. Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations	78

Discussion	78
Implications and Recommendations	86
Epilogue: A Story That Deserves To Be Told	93
References	95
Appendix A	100
Appendix B: IRB Approval	101
Appendix C	102
Appendix D	103
Appendix E	105
Appendix F.....	106
Appendix G	108

Chapter 1

Introduction

The profession of preschool to grade 12 school leaders is comprised of many challenges due to the comprehensive and unpredictable nature of an educational setting. School leaders are accountable to school community members and are expected to lead and make multiple decisions for various situations daily. Most educators prepare themselves for a career focused on fostering learning, thus the reality of having to teach or lead in a trauma induced situation is unnerving (Mears, 2012).

The research site for this study is a school community consisting of students, staff, parents, and community members. These role groups are critical stakeholders and partners in the effort to support high quality academics, extra-curricular opportunities, social, behavioral, and emotional well-being for students in a safe environment. Unfortunately, schools are not immune to crisis situations that cause devastation and disequilibrium when least expected. As a result, school leaders are sometimes called upon to make critical decisions for entire school communities amidst very serious, unpredictable and tragic events. A closer look at school crises in Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) public schools over the past decade, show the growing need for school leaders to address serious and dangerous situations on and off school campuses. Affirming Liou's (2015) position that the nature of schools facing continuous change, lends to the likelihood of unexpected crises and "in the daily administration of schools, the only certainty is that there is no certainty" (p. 248).

In 2005, a series of altercations fueled by racial comments between high school students after a basketball game, resulted in the expulsion and suspension of students (Brannon & Blakeman, 2005). Months later, a high school student lost an eye after being shot with a BB gun

during a fight at a bus stop and a faculty member was injured trying to break up a fight at another school (Moreno, 2006). The love triangle stabbing of a high school junior by another student in math class in 2010 was not fatal, however, indicative of the increasing seriousness and range of crises situations occurring in Hawai'i public schools (David, n.d). In 2015, 30 police officers responded to a major altercation and several smaller fights involving hundreds of students from two different high schools. As a result, pepper spray was used and several students were arrested (Gutierrez, 2015). A recent rash of terroristic threats put several schools on high alert requiring additional security and lockdown drills at five schools after a gun threat. The incident that was classified as first-degree terroristic threatening (Kakesako, 2016).

School crises in the form of potential health epidemics have also found its way to DOE public schools. In 2008, two schools within a two month period reported a confirmed case of tuberculosis (Aquilar, 2008). A number of schools also experienced the 2016 Hepatitis A scare when cafeteria employees were confirmed to have contracted the disease (Arevalo, 2016). These sobering accounts are a cross-section of mounting crisis situations that school leaders are experiencing and responsible for managing. Thus highlighting Liou's (2015) claim that the inability to manage school crises efficiently is due to the complex and unpredictable nature of crises in an increasingly volatile world.

This qualitative study will examine the lived experiences and personal accounts of unique school crises that the author and the study's participants were responsible for making decisions for in their capacity as school leaders.

Problem Statement

A significant school crisis can be traumatic, devastating, unpredictable, and complex. In most cases the crisis is unchartered, the school community is unprepared, and conventional ways

of addressing a crisis may not align with diverse societal norms, cultural values, and belief systems of the multiple people affected (Liou, 2015). For these reasons, the experiences of a school leader's decision-making in response to a school crisis are worth examining and conceptualizing. It is also important to explore a school leader's level of preparedness and available resources related to the preparation, response, and recovery of a significant school crisis.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to examine the factors that influence school leaders' decision making in the midst and aftermath of a significant school crisis.

Significance of the Study

The contributions of this study relative to knowledge and theory include providing educators a translucent view of the social, cultural, and psychological significances of relative to school leaders making decisions in response to a crisis that affect an entire learning organization and community. This study can also serve to build awareness as to the current state of school crises management in Hawai'i DOE public schools. Thus, serving as a catalyst for Hawai'i DOE leadership to expand their scope of efforts in the area of policy development and standard procedures to support school leaders in effectively and expeditiously managing school crises. The study will promote school community and stakeholders' awareness for training, resources, and protocols related to school crises essential for ensuring student safety and well-being. The author's story and participants' personal narratives will also serve to provide insights into micro and macro cultures that influence a school leader's decision making in a crisis situation. It is the researcher's hope that this study provides authentic, substantive, and comprehensive information

for school leaders to thrive in the process of making decisions for school crises, instead of trying to survive.

Research Questions

The overarching and supporting research questions reflect the author's aim to gather information from school leaders' relative to their decision-making experiences during and after a significant school crises. In sum, the research questions speak to the purpose for the study and provide the study's participants and author an opportunity to share their personal accounts and recollections of leading through a crisis event.

Overarching Question

- What factors influence a school leader's decision-making in the face of a significant school crisis?

Supporting Questions

- What significance does a decision-making framework or process have on a school leader's ability to make decisions in a crisis situation?
- What impact or influence do school community members have on a school leader's decision-making in a crisis situation?
- What ethical dilemmas do school leaders face in a crisis situation?
- How prepared are Hawai'i public school leaders to make decisions in crisis situations?
- What are the immediate and long-term professional and personal implications for school leaders in the aftermath of school crisis?

School Crisis Defined

Whether big or small, the school leader learned through her travels that the real magnitude of a crisis is in the eye of the victim.

—Lindsey, *The Empress' New Clothes—An Elevator Fairytale*, 2016

The word “crisis” has various definitions and origins. This study uses the Middle English

form of the word “crisis,” which originated between 1375–1425 from the Latin word, “judgment” and the Greek word, “krisis” or “krinein,” meaning to “separate” or “judge.” Crisis is defined as:

(1) A crucial or decisive point or situation, especially a difficult or unstable situation involving an impending change; (2) A sudden change in the course of a disease or fever, toward either improvement or deterioration; (3) An emotionally stressful event or traumatic change in a person's life, and; (4) A point in a story or drama when a conflict reaches its highest tension and must be resolved.

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/crisis>)

Allender (2006) describes a crisis as “a context for opportunity and growth, but it also takes us to the edge where some don’t survive” (p. 29). His metaphor below helps to portray the stark and gripping nature of a crisis in progress:

Crisis is not a bump in the pavement that causes us to hold the steering wheel more tightly; it is the wall we hit while we’re steering with everything we’ve got—and it leaves us wondering how we will survive. (p. 29)

Liou (2015) defines a school crisis as:

A traumatic event associated with a school—whether occurring inside or outside it—and is characterized by uncertainty, complexity, urgency, and ambiguity. A school crisis involves all school community members, extending, at times even beyond students, employees, and their families to others who have a special interest in the school’s welfare; it affects not only the school community but also the overall community and society. (p. 250)

For this study, a “significant school crisis” is defined as an event that involved a student or staff member, disrupted normal school business, was prolonged, and went public via the media. The definition of a “school leader” is a principal of a school at the time that the significant school crisis occurred.

Literary elements are used in this study to help format the personal narratives of the participants and the autoethnographic accounts of the author. Ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, was the first to use the beginning, middle, and end, literary format in his plays; and Roman grammarian, Aelius Donatus later named this three-part literary structure protasis, epitasis, and catastrophe (Ray, n.d., para. 2). A prologue will be included to provide context and background, and an epilogue will bring closure to the school leaders’ stories. The school leaders participating in this study will be referred to as Principal Characters to protect their identities.

Prologue: A Story That Begets a Story

We cannot live without stories. Our need for stories of our lives is so huge, so intense, so fundamental, that we would lose our humanity if we stopped trying to tell stories of who we think we are. And even more important, if we stopped wanting to listen to each other’s stories.

-Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer*, 2003, p. xix

Walk with me as I tell a story. A story of hearts broken in an instant, and spirits mended with time and reflection. A story of hope in the future of young lives and in the legacy of the leaders entrusted with these lives. A story that weaves the unique experiences and palpable memories of school leaders into a collective introspective interpretation of leadership and decision-making contextualized by significant school crises. A story of school leaders that illuminate courage and authenticity while making critical decisions in the throes and aftermath of a school crisis. A story that begets a story.

Creswell (2013) describes narrative stories as individual experiences that “shed light on the identities of individual and how they see themselves” (p. 71). The stories in this study highlight individuals remembering some of the most critical times of their careers and how these recollections affected their school communities, as well as themselves personally and professionally. The autoethnography genre uses autobiographical experiences to “gain cultural understanding of self and others directly and indirectly connected to self” and provides opportunities for analysis and interpretation of societal culture (Chang, 2008, p. 49). Muncey (2010) shares the following purpose of autoethnography:

It is the complexity of individuals that autoethnography seeks to address; the muddled, idiosyncratic, florid eccentricities that make us unique as opposed to part of a population. The unexamined assumptions that govern everyday life, behaviour and decision-making are as strong as any overt beliefs. The shape and size of these unexamined assumptions can be considered the staple diet of the autoethnographer. (p. xi)

The author’s own recollections and assumptions of managing school crises, allow her to channel and interpret the essence of other school leaders’ stories as they retell and relive their personal experiences of heartbreak, spirit, and hope when making decisions in the face of a school crises.

The Protasis: The Miseducation of an Educator

I often joke about having a subpar formal education, but as the old adage goes, “Many a true word is spoken in jest.”

-Lindsey et al., *EDEA 667C: Introduction to Educational Policy Studies Paper*, 2016

Sigh with me as I tell a story. A story of early memories that my half-century psyche will allow. A story of vividly disquieting, yet critically seminal ones. A story of irony and destiny—that of the miseducation of an educator.

I was in the fourth grade when my family moved to the Big Island from O‘ahu, forcing me to deal with issues that accompany transitioning to another school—making new friends and

learning a new set of social norms. Flashbacks of elementary school include watching a reel-to-reel film of a sparsely dressed Hawaiian boy running across lava rocks, dressing up like Betsy Ross for a Bicentennial parade, and singing original folk songs with a Caucasian guy who wandered on campus during recess one day. I did not know where Seattle was at the time, however, singing loudly about paddling to get there made me happy.

I was not on board when my parents enrolled me in a private school in the seventh grade. Living off the grid meant waking up at five o'clock in the morning in below 50 degree temperatures and getting ready by candlelight. The nearly two-hour commute to school and having to sport a uniform with sailor tie intensified my distain for my new school and a phobia of teacher nuns. The effort to make friends was thwarted by unhealthy peer relationships and physical altercations with girls from public schools due to a long standing public versus private school rivalry. These factors combined with the disposition of an oppositional teenager created a self-sabotage cocktail that combated any chance of a decent formal education. My downhill social spiral gained momentum when I failed to get enough popularity votes to be a key role on the ninth grade May Day Court. I was convinced that the highly coveted title of a princess or the Queen was the initiation and rite of passage for members of the "in crowd" for the next four years. I would not be around long enough to test this theory.

For the next two years, I successfully preserved my low C grade average, rowdy reputation, and lady-in-waiting May Day Court status. I had also developed a love-hate relationship with my bus driver who I was convinced only tolerated my behavior because we were both of Filipino decent. The recurrent threats of being kicked off the bus, perilously expedited my parents' decision to allow me to drive myself to school. I eventually learned how to navigate traffic lights and intersections, however, still managed to accidentally hit a student in

a crosswalk on Crazy Sock Day. The student was not injured, however, I thought I would never recover from the embarrassment that I felt as a sizable audience watched me sob and stare down at the goofy eyes glued to my socks.

Social distractions continued to make it hard for me to concentrate on academics, as did the lack of academic rigor and quality instruction due to a revolving door of substitutes and aging nuns. Athletics never had a chance to engage me in something positive and character-building, due to a failed attempt at making the cheerleader squad and discovering that I was a pregnant goalie at the start of my first soccer season.

At sixteen, I was required to enroll in an alternative public school program with other pregnant teenagers. One teacher was responsible for teaching all of the core content subjects for ninth to twelve graders, thus exposing me to another rendition of watered-down instruction and expectations. This special school was located in an “annex” and made me feel even more isolated and stigmatized. It also caused a huge gap in my academic skills, which was filled with haunting images of fetus development posters and my teacher’s mantra of teenage mothers getting pregnant within two years of having their first baby.

After my daughter was born my parents allowed me to continue my high school education at a public school because I did not have enough credits to graduate on time. Besides, going back to a Catholic school after having a baby did not seem right. My academic expectations flat lined after being scheduled in special motivation classes because I met the criteria of an alienated student. At 17 I was a teenage mom, in danger of not graduating on time, and statistically on track to have another baby within several months.

This is where my educational journey took the proverbial turn and I was saved by a passionate, corky, caring, and talented choir teacher. I was finally engaged in a positive learning

environment and was inspired to do well. I also had the opportunity to reinvent myself. Having the ability to sing was not new to me because I come from a family of entertainers and grew up singing. The novelty of my rebirth was getting attention for something positive and being a part of creating something that sounded so beautiful. I remember being moved emotionally the first time our choir class got all the parts right as we sang Bradduh Iz's rendition of "Hawai'i '78" (Ioane, 1976). Even in my youth, I could appreciate the paradox of the profound lyrics conveyed through lulling harmony. With my choir teacher's encouragement and recommendation, I auditioned for a visiting ensemble singing group and was awarded a college scholarship. In my last year of high school, I was reunited with my elementary classmates, did not succumb to the dire statistic of having another baby, and was voted May Day Queen. I had finally arrived.

I believe that my formal educational experiences greatly impacted me as an educator and school leader. It provided me with the context that I can draw from when alienated youth with chronic discipline problems may benefit from an empathetic ear in addition to or in place of another assessment or program. This insight is also beneficial given the new and exponentially increased challenges that teenagers face regarding negative peer interactions fueled by social media. Being segregated as a pregnant teen also helps me relate to youth who feel singled out, demoralized, and discriminated against because they appear to be outside of the norm or require differentiated approaches to learn. My early travels through three unique educational settings gave me a gauge of what mediocre teaching may look like and what quality teaching could look like.

Epitasis: The Spirit of an Educator

I was destined to be an educator. Despite my laments about my educational adventures, I hail from educator lineage. My maternal grandmother was still teaching when she filled out my

college application and declared elementary education as my major. Thus, sealing my fate. I was not sold on the prospect of being a teacher, however, I went along with the idea for lack of a better plan. My parents decided to move back to O‘ahu in 1987 and I followed. In large part because my daughter was being raised with my siblings. I also needed to reboot and focus on completing my college education. Prior to moving, I was still performing with the college ensemble group and working part-time in the hotel industry. While attending college on O‘ahu, music continued to be a part of my life via the pop culture karaoke explosion.

My first teaching position was on the island of Moloka‘i because positions were scarce on O‘ahu when I graduated from college. My only options were hard to fill teaching assignments in rural areas on the outer islands so I decided to teach on Moloka‘i since I was told that I had family there and I felt obligated to start my teaching career. I went from student teaching in a Kindergarten class to teaching a high school special motivation class within weeks of graduating from college. My daughter stayed with my parents on O‘ahu and flew back home on weekends to curtail my homesickness. After a year of teaching on Moloka‘i, I submitted a hardship request in hopes that I could apply for a teaching assignment on O‘ahu to be closer to my daughter. My request was denied by my District Superintendent, who was also paternal grandmother. I was extremely disappointed at the time, however, in retrospect I respect my grandmother’s decision. As an educational leader I fully understand the implications of these types of decisions.

I am grateful for my teaching experience on Moloka‘i and feel blessed to have had the opportunity to work among an extraordinarily resilient and hopeful school community. On October 28, 1989, two months before I moved to Moloka‘i, a plane crash took the lives of all 20 people on board a flight from Maui to Moloka‘i. Eight members of Moloka‘i High School's volleyball girls’ and boys’ teams, the girls' coach, a faculty member, and the Athletic Director

lost their lives in this tragedy. The crash was a result of a pilot error and is one of the deadliest aviation accidents in our state's history ("From KHON2's archives", 2016).

I experienced a myriad of feelings about being there on the heels of this tragedy. At first, I felt like an intruder and could not fathom how the school staff and students were able to go about their business in light of the tremendous loss and unprecedented event. It was difficult for me to understand how a school community was able to rebound from such a devastating event. Decades later, being a part of the school community during the aftermath of a significant school crisis provided me with a unique context and perspective of healing as a whole. My experiences continue to resonate in my heart and was the impetus for the essay included in my Doctorate in Professional Educational Practices Program (2013) application. The pseudonym "Aloha High School" is used to protect the identity of the author's school.

Working on Moloka'i in 1989 at the time of the volleyball team tragedy that claimed the lives of volleyball team members, coaches, and the athletic director, taught me so much about how academics, athletics and community are integral and essential aspects of the educational milieu and in turn how important academics are for the community. I believe the experience prepared me for the events and aftermath related to the Aloha High School (AHS) football season forfeiture in 2010. I recall the day that I called my Complex Area Superintendent to inform her that I was going to self-report to the O'ahu Interscholastic Association (OIA) about an ineligible player. I remember feeling so ashamed to be letting the boys, the school, and the community down. Then there was the difficult decision to appeal the OIA's decision to uphold the forfeiture of the entire season. I kept harkening back to the strength of the Moloka'i school community during their tragedy. These memories enabled me to keep a focus on the students of AHS through the hooded

disapproval of my own OIA colleague and the scrutiny of thousands of disappointed fans. At the time, I did not feel equipped to handle the devastating KHIS student suicides on the heels of the forfeiture, however, our school community was able to endure this enormous loss and keep student achievement and emotional wellness at the forefront. It is so very difficult to believe that tragedies, such as the ones I experienced on Moloka'i as a counselor and then later at AHS as an administrator, can be dealt with successfully. To categorize such tragedies as "leadership challenges" does not seem to accurately describe such jolting situations that have equally jolting aftermaths. With that being said, dealing with tragedies that have such a devastating impact on both the school and the community has been a leadership challenge. My leadership style is a highly reflective one and I often evaluate situations with the benefit of hindsight. After most reflections, I have a high level of confidence as to what I would do differently should a similar situation arise. Reflecting on these tragedies, however, do not yield the same level of confidence. That is the reason I would describe dealing with tragedy, dealing with the aftermath of tragedy, and dealing with preventing tragedy as leadership challenges. As a specific example, it was not until after the suicides at AHS that I learned about Hawai'i having one of the highest suicide rates amongst adolescents. It is my belief that having such information beforehand is vital for mitigating such a challenge. Researching, analyzing, and trying to solve the leadership challenge of dealing with devastating tragedies will surely benefit administrators in Hawai'i and in turn would benefit our communities.

For this study, I considered several topics, however always circled back to the allure and complexity of leadership in the face of school crises. After my two-year assignment at Moloka'i High School, I returned to O'ahu to work in a federal program coordinator position before

becoming a resource teacher at the district and state level. In 1999, I was accepted into the DOE administration training program. Since getting my administrative certificate in 2000, I have been a school administrator for levels ranging from preschool to grade 12 and have worked as an educational officer at the complex, complex area, district, and state level. My first permanent vice principal and principal assignments were at the school that I currently work at. As for my singing interest, I had somehow morphed into the wedding and funeral singer for family and friends.

The Catastrophe: The Heartbreak of a School Leader

I have experienced many emergency and crisis situations as a Hawai'i DOE public school administrator. These include assaults, bomb threats, vandalism, graffiti, fights, bullying, territorial rivalries, terroristic threatening, athletic forfeitures, cyberbullying, attempted suicides, suicide ideations, suicides, explosive devices, medical emergencies, arson, and accidental deaths. Mears (2014) points out that, "the gravity of the situation can only be understood by recognizing that the actual number of individuals affected by these events includes not only the victims and their family and friends, but also the witnesses to the traumatic loss, and often the entire school community" (p. 14).

Since experiencing the aftermath of Moloka'i High School's crisis, I have been particularly interested in the accounts of colleagues, friends, and other school community members in relation to the dynamics of their personal experiences with school crises. Through these antecedents and my own viewpoint, I have come to respect the notion that the gravity and magnitude of a crisis is in the eye of the victim. Allender (2006) also adds the interesting dimension that "crisis involves two major elements: danger and shame. Those characteristics help leaders make a distinction between an actual crisis and a "normal" problem (p. 64). Thus,

confirming that every school demands and deserves a school leader who is able to make a decision or “a conscious choice made between two or more competing alternatives” in the tumultuous atmosphere of a significant school crisis (Johnson & Kruse, 2009, p. 13).

My first day as an official school leader was filled with a whirlwind of well wishes, condolences, documents to sign, problems to solve, messages to return, and a bomb threat. I discovered the bomb threat message a few days after it was called in while I was setting up the voicemail feature on my phone. Had I gotten the brief, but potent threat on the day that it was intended for, the decision-making steps involved to address this potentially significant school crisis would have taken a minimum of three hours to manage and would have directly impacted approximately 1,600 students and staff members. These procedures may have included a Lockdown drill, a Shelter-In-Place drill, the involvement of the police and fire departments or a combination of these actions depending on the level of the perceived threat. In addition, whomever answered the threatening phone call would have been required to ask the caller a series of questions from a Hawai‘i DOE Bomb Threat Checklist that is kept near all office phones in the event of a phoned in bomb threat.

In addition to any follow-up actions prompted by the Bomb Threat Checklist, the families of our students and staff would have also been impacted to varying degrees depending on their own discernments and reactions in response to reports of a potential school crisis. In my experience, it is customary for unofficial reports of a potential or confirmed school crisis to spread via social media or students using their cell phones. My official communication to families typically include a letter outlining the school’s response to a crisis or potential crisis and not a play-by-play update that many families desire and expect (Appendix A). The case of the recorded bomb threat was concluded with a routine police report. I did not receive any follow up

information from the police department regarding this case even though the report included the caller's phone number that was recorded by the school phone's caller identification feature.

School leaders in my district are not required to participate in formal training related to crisis management. In the past 15 years, I have had two formal opportunities as an educational officer to participate in a session related to responding to a school crisis situation. One being a mock drill to practice identifying alleged suspects in an emergency situation, and the other was the opportunity to hear a school leader's moving account of her experience with leading her school during the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center.

For this study, I chose to elaborate on the self-reporting of an athletic ineligibility as the significant school crisis that I experienced as a school leader because of the enormous impact that it had on the author's school community and the community at large. In addition, many other people seemingly tangential to the event may have been affected by the ripple effect of my decision by way of annual proceeds generated from OIA playoff games. In addition to monetary support for OIA schools' athletic programs, the purpose of the OIA is stated below:

The purpose of this association shall be the promotion of unity and cooperation amongst the member schools in the establishment and administration of policies and regulations for implementing an interscholastic athletic program. In the performance of these functions it shall be the aim of the association to stress educational and cultural values, promote skills in competitive activities and foster citizenship and mutual respect. The association and its membership shall be governed by its Constitution and By-Laws.

(Oahu Interscholastic Association Handbook, 2014, para. 1)

The OIA bylaw that the student ineligibility violated was in accordance with the OIA bylaws section pertaining to the student's years of eligibility. This bylaw states that "upon entry

to ninth grade, students shall have only four (4) consecutive years of eligibility” (Oahu Interscholastic Association Bylaws, 2014, p. 2). Although I could not find a direct reference to principals “self-reporting” in the OIA Handbook or the OIA Bylaws, to the best of her knowledge, only formal reports made principals are cause to initiate official fact finding efforts by the OIA. The OIA bylaws pertaining to the duty to report cases of ineligibility states:

It shall be the duty of any athletic director or principal who has knowledge or information that places in question the eligibility of any student who is likely to participate in an Association game or contest, to report such information immediately to the principal of the student’s school and the principal of the school on whose team such student is participating, if any. (Oahu Interscholastic Association Bylaws, 2014, p. 5)

The OIA penalties bylaw for a student’s years of eligibility violation include:

(1) Forfeiture of the game or contest by the team that used an ineligible player; (2) forfeiture of games or contests; (3) adjust league standings, forfeiture of championships, or eligibility for State Tournament participation; (4) set other sanctions as determined by the membership, and; (5) when a team or individual who qualifies for OIA or HHSAA championship playoffs cannot participate, the next highest place league finisher shall replace the original qualifying team or individual. (Oahu Interscholastic Association Bylaws, 2014, p. 6).

I found it interesting that the OIA penalties bylaw was revised in June 2011, shortly after my school’s forfeiture. Also, the reason that I appealed the OIA’s penalty decision was because I did not agree with it and believed that my students should not have been penalized. The following are the stated reasons for schools to be able to appeal the OIA’s penalties decisions:

“1) Alleged violation of or inconsistency between the Constitution or Bylaws of the Association with federal or state statutes or Administrative Rules of the Department of Education; or 2) Alleged failure to follow procedures established in the Constitution or By-Laws of the Association; or 3) Failure to follow due process.” (Oahu Interscholastic Association Bylaws, 2014, p. 8)

The story about my decision to report the ineligibility broke shortly after I sang at a friend’s funeral services. I recall being worried about getting emotional when singing because of the heart wrenching circumstances. I was also taken aback at the amount of people who were in attendance and tried to settle my nerves by telling myself that if I messed up, no one knew who I was. After my decision to self-report went public, I could not help but think about the people who were at the services and wondered if they would recognize my name if they heard the news. I admit that this was silly and shallow, however, I was so ashamed about what happened and at the time this was my strategy for psychological survival and helped me get through the ordeal. It was easier for me to be fixated on the two hundred sympathetic people who I had a common bond with on that day, rather than focus on conceivably thousands of people riveted to a sensational story with a mysterious plot and villainous character.

My conscious decision early in the crisis situation to not read any articles or tune into any newscasts related to the forfeiture was also a critical element of my survival plan. However, years later my ego will not let me forget a teacher telling me that a photo of me in the newspaper was not flattering. Most people were kind enough not to point out what was being reported in the media and those who wanted to make their opinion known certainly did. These face-to-face and heart-to-heart conversations on the topic had more credence and relevance to me.

In the course of doing research for this study, I forced myself to read the media reports regarding my significant school crisis. Those that were especially infuriating, were the inaccurate reports about the eligibility status of the individual students involved in the situation. To this point, a reporter claimed that school personnel checked the students' records and verified that they were eligible and that "details were sketchy at best, but word was that they had repeated eighth grade in order to graduate and begin LDS missions immediately upon graduation at age 19 (in 2011)" (Honda, 2010). This information was completely false and unverified. It is also imperative to note that the school leader is the only person authorized to represent and speak on behalf of the school. Reporters can argue that the lack of response from school leaders gives them no other choice but to report what their "credible sources" tell them. However, the privacy and emotional well-being of children should guide the moral compass of journalists and "credible sources."

Fortunately, more reliable accounts and glimpses of the level of maturity and graciousness of our students were available as evidenced by the following article excerpts:

The state's top ranked football team, has been disqualified from competing in the Oahu Interscholastic Association playoffs and the state tournament because it played an ineligible player earlier in the season. Sources tell Hawaii News Now the player was either too old, was competing for a fifth year, or both...

A school staff member said the school reported the rule violation to the league after it was brought to the school's attention by an anonymous source...

Players told Hawaii News Now they have not been told who the ineligible player is, but whoever he is, they said they are not angry with him because they are family. "It's something we didn't expect to happen. We wanted to take the championship and state

championship. I guess some things in life just happen and you have to take it as it is," a student added. (Baer, 2010)

The information in the article written by (Kobayashi, 2010) was not completely accurate, however, excerpts below outline the actions that school community members took following to the OIA's decision to deny my appeal in response to the disqualification of my football team:

The football players and their parents filed a lawsuit yesterday challenging the OIA's decision last week to bar the school from the playoffs because it had to forfeit games over an ineligible player. The suit said innocent team members and others would be unduly harmed by an "inadvertent clerical error."...

The OIA, the suit's lawyers said, has handled other incidents in "far less draconian" ways than "penalizing the entire team comprised of entirely innocent student athletes."

They said the OIA refused to hear the players' and parents' side of the controversy before the organization made its decision. The refusal, the suit said, violated their rights to due process under the state and federal constitutions...

But after Sakamoto met the lawyers privately in chambers in the afternoon, the OIA and HHSAA lawyers said they opposed the request for an injunction. (Kobayashi, 2010)

In mid-November 2010, I received the devastating news that one of our football players committed suicide. I had no formal training in regards to dealing with such a tragic event. Members of my counseling team had suicide awareness training, however, the news was so incredulous and devastating that I did not have time to convene a crisis team discuss a plan. In truth, no one would have been able to prevent the immediate and frantic need for everyone to be together in one place and try to make some sense of this tragedy. So, like the muscle memory of a top athlete and the efficiency of a well-oiled machine, everyone followed the same procedures

that were employed in the past for an unexpected accidental death of a student. Within minutes, students and staff were streaming into the gym for an impromptu assembly without a second thought as to what the experts would have recommended or what I thought was the best course of action to take in response to this crisis. I had no choice but to stand in front of over 1,700 shocked and silent people and deliver a jumble of inadequate and hollow words. I was then left on my own to contact experts, compose letters, and conduct meetings to help address the overwhelming disbelief and indescribable grief felt by our school community and beyond. The unfiltered criticism from some people regarding how I handled the situation was difficult to hear. However, the silence that I got from the DOE state personnel in response to our earth shattering crisis was loud and clear.

Trying to maintain the balance between experts' recommendations for the overall well-being of students and being respectful of how families wanted to express their love and grief for their departed loved one, was extremely difficult. To add to the complexity of the situation, the media crossed the line and could not resist reporting the suicide and the victim's affiliation with the football team that was disqualified from the OIA playoffs. I resented the overtures that the two incidents were connected. I was also surprised to learn that several other Hawai'i DOE public high schools had experienced student suicides. This made the absence of DOE state level assistance during and after my crisis even more infuriating.

Within a month of the first suicide and eerily predictive, another student took his life. This student was also a part of the football team and his death was suspected to be a copycat suicide. What does one say to a gym full people after the second suicidal death of a student within weeks of the first suicide? According to experts, nothing, and this time I complied. Shortly after, I was told that the brother of the second student who committed suicide wrote in

his student planner, “I hate the principal because she didn’t have an assembly for my brother.” Besides listening to the experts about the handling of suicidal deaths, this incident did not receive the same level of media as the previous one. An educational consultant who was active with suicide organizations in Hawai‘i reached out to me and offered to speak to media executives about the unprecedented reporting of our suicides. I was grateful for this assistance and for the many other people who offered their support in response to the serious and widespread problem of suicide amongst our young adults in Hawai‘i. The topic is rarely ever discussed until it becomes personal.

Other crisis events that followed the athletic ineligibility included the death of a student in a moto-cross accident, a gigantic tree cut down by students, and explosive devices found in a neighboring park. In the case of the explosives, KHON2 reported the following story:

The Honolulu Police Department activated their bomb squad unit four times this week. Two of those cases happened on Thursday. One of the threats put two Kahuku schools on lockdown.

In the three other bomb scares, the device in question turned out to be nothing serious, but the item found at Kahuku District Park early Thursday morning had the potential to do damage.

The park became a crime scene after a city employee spotted something out of place.

“Saw gates closing and doors closing and just police closing up roads. It was crazy,” a parent said.

Honolulu Police evacuated the area as Kahuku Elementary and nearby High School went on lockdown. (Randle, 2013)

The dangerous explosives crisis generated very little attention from stakeholders and zero assistance from DOE state personnel. Nonetheless, I reached out to the DOE state personnel and requested a meeting to debrief our emergency procedures in response to the incident.

The destruction of an old tree on the school campus at the hands of students ignited a significant school crisis that started with a staff member posting a picture of the felled tree on Facebook.

This crisis was kept alive and relevant for months due to the visceral reactions, widespread debate, and criticism of some school community members in response to my decision about the students' consequences for such a senseless and outrageous act of vandalism.

An enormous amount of my time was spent deliberating, meeting with families, and trying to rectify the situation with environmental constituents in the community. The fanfare of a fellow classmate donating a tree planted by the humbled students as restitution to the school and Mother Nature, started the mending process for a crisis that impacted many people on and off my school campus. You do not realize how many people love trees until one goes down on your watch or how hard it is to find a state arborist when you need one.

The Epilogue: The Hope of a School Leader

The decision for me to leave the school leadership position to do a temporary assignment at the district level was a difficult one to make. People close to me suspected that I was burnt out from the series of crisis events and was running away to an easier position. I thought this was pure bluster at the time, however, in retrospect they were probably right. The level of responsibility and influence that a school leader's decisions have on people's lives relative to crises is extremely daunting and can take a toll on even experienced school leaders. At this point in my career, I was experienced enough to know that my decisions could not make everyone happy, unfortunately, I was human enough to care. According to Allender (2006), "a good leader will, in time, disappoint everyone. Leadership requires a willingness to not be liked, in fact, a willingness to be hated" (p. 14). It was not my time. I started reflecting on my decisions and my leadership identity and realized that I did not recognize myself, nor some of my decisions anymore. I was "leading with a limp" and needed some time to heal (Allender, 2006).

The time that I spent away from the school level was invaluable to me on a professional and personal level. My work at the district and state level gave me the time and the opportunity to acquire a deeper understanding of initiatives related to quality teaching and learning. When attending district and state meetings in the past, I spent most of the time outside on my phone dealing with school issues. Going back to graduate school exposed me to the world and the wealth of literature. The application of research related to practice has been revolutionary for me as a school leader and educational practitioner. The knowledge of integrating praxis with theory has given me the tools and the confidence to affect change that make a difference for students. More importantly, I have gained the insight into the significance of people needing to trust and care enough to want to change. I now believe that I have the skills and the patience to help make this happen. A lot of school leaders can run a school; very few can affect change.

The experience of working with a cohort also tested my ability to simply listen. At first, my natural instinct as a leader was to furnish the answers and get the problem solved. Learning to collaborate and trust others slowly helped to chip away the thick and high protective walls that I built around me as a school leader. Fellow cohort, Pastor Paul Akau, blessed our class with the song, “We’ve Only Just Begun,” early in the program. His time with us on earth was short; and his melody of promise and renewal came at a time when some of us needed it the most.

People ask me all the time how it feels to be back at the school level? The short answer is that it feels right and that I love being back with the students. The long answer is that the difference this time around is that I knew why I was coming back; I have also learned to recognize and cherish the infinite moments of our students’ successes instead of dwelling on the events that the press, social media, and naysayers try to dictate.

The intensity and frequency of crisis situations are still staggering, however, I feel more capable of dealing with them due to my context and new knowledge afforded by research and the stories of other school leaders beyond this study. One of my first crisis situations while back at the school level involved a student who attempted suicide months earlier because he was being cyberbullied and was having suicidal ideations again. Before the student left for the hospital, I handed him my cell number and asked him to call me anytime if he wanted to talk or if he needed anything. He looked surprised and asked, “Miss, you giving me your cell number?” I hugged him and tried not to cry. His eager and innocent reaction to a seemingly insignificant phone number emphasizes the complex and distorted maze of reality that some youngsters cannot navigate by themselves. Such crisis events are also colossal reminders of how frighteningly fragile and unpredictable teenagers can be and that the leadership and decision-making role of a school leader has intensified with the influence of technology, social media, and pop culture on some students’ social identity, self-worth, and existence.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Context for School Crises

One of the most notorious school crisis in American history was the 1999 Colorado Columbine High School shooting. This horrific crime ended in 13 dead, over 20 wounded, and the suicides of two student shooters. The genuine threat of this crisis resonated with schools nationwide, setting off numerous debates and policies on gun control and school safety. States and districts reexamined their policies related to requirements of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and adopted “zero tolerance” policies in response to students who demonstrated disruptive and threatening behaviors (Columbine High School Shootings, 2009). Hawai‘i joined this national trend and passed legislation defining its own “zero tolerance” policies. Hawai‘i’s 2010 policy revision states that students who possess a dangerous weapon, or possess, sell, or use illegal drugs and intoxicating substances “may be excluded from attending school for up to ninety-two school days, as determined by the principal and approved by the superintendent” (Zero Tolerance Policy, 2016).

The “Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2015” report provides data based on nationwide school crime and safety trends to help ensure the safety of students (May, 2016). Indicators in this report derive from multiple data sources and surveys from various role groups and levels of educational institutions around the nation. Recent data show that 53 schools reported a violent death of a student or staff member due to a homicide, suicide, or law related intervention within an 11 month period from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. Data for students between the ages from 12–18 in 2014 show approximately 850,100 nonfatal victimizations including 363,700 thefts and 486,400 violent victimizations. Nonfatal victimizations include

thefts, different degrees and types of assault, rape, and robbery. In the 2013–2014 school year, 1.3 million discipline incidents were reported due to alcohol, drugs, violence, or weapons possession (Zhang, Musu-Gillette, & Oudekerk 2016) (Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2015, May, 2016).

Fortunately, Hawai‘i public schools have not experienced the magnitude of a school crisis parallel to the Columbine High School shooting, however, the school crises highlighted in Chapter One confirms the need for Hawai‘i school leaders to be prepared for unexpected situations that call for immediate and effective decision-making skills.

Throughout this dissertation, I employ the concept of a significant school crisis as an unexpected event that involved students or staff members, disrupted normal school business, was prolonged, and went public via the media. Mear’s (2012) contends that school crisis and significant disruptions to an educational environment caused by “natural disasters, community violence, suicides, fatal accidents, and a wide variety of life-threatening events bring tragedies that affect the educational arena” (p. 14). Cornell and Sheras (1998) contend that many crises manifest from existing problems or even a single student, constituting a process rather than an event. Furthermore, the unexpected nature of a crisis make it difficult for any plan to prepare for and anticipate unique challenges of each situation (Cornell & Sheras, 1998).

I concur with Mear’s (2012) breadth of crises situations and can also appreciate Cornell and Sheras’ (1998) contribution regarding their attention to factors such as the performance of school personnel precipitating a crisis or making a situation worse. As a leader committed to the building and maintenance of organizational systems, the lack of efficient staff performance within systems may also contribute to the smoldering or combustion of a crisis. Liou’s (2015) notion that schools are more vulnerable to unexpected crises due to the environment of constant

change, offers yet another viewpoint. I can agree with Liou's perspective since I have been blessed and cursed by societal changes during my tenure of 25 as an educator, as well as the milieu of education.

I share Cornell and Sheras' (1998) concern about the ineffectiveness of crisis plans due to the unpredictable nature of crises and Liou's (2015) criticism of inadequate school crisis management despite access to resources and databases resonate with the intent of this study in light of school leader training and preparedness for a significant school crisis. I concur with this stance given my experience with a number of significant school crises and having had only two required trainings over a span of two decades to help prepare me for serious and unexpected events.

Liou (2015) describes a school crisis as involving "all school community members, extending, at times even beyond students, employees, and their families to others who have a special interest in the school's welfare; it affects not only the school community but also the overall community and society" (p. 250). Very few school leaders in this state have experienced the richness and magnitude of a school community that is powered by unbridled pride and claim to a region and legacy matched by none. Even fewer can identify with the devastation and heartbreak of a people school community crushed by the magnitude of an initial crisis and the shattering ones that followed. To this point, it is important for school leaders to pay close attention to the effectiveness of crisis plans (Cornell & Sheras, 1998) and to realize that the urgency, ambiguity, and complexity of traumatic school events may thwart the success of conventional ways of addressing a crisis (Liou, 2015). Cornell and Sheras (1998) also advise that timely responses to rising crises can serve to minimize the breadth and depth of hurt and angry feelings of school community members.

Decision Making Frameworks

Johnson and Kruse (2009) contend that life is the embodiment of past decisions we have made, which eventually defines our future. This incredible obligation is reiterated by the circumstance that educational leaders are often times left to contend with a variety of complicated and unstructured issues that call for prioritization, foresight, and “tradeoffs to serve the greatest common interest” (Saaty, 1995, p. 4). I am in agreement with Johnson and Kruse’s (2009) stance that efficient decision-making skills of leaders distinguish them from their counterparts. To this point, “decision making is perhaps the lowest common denominator of leadership exercised in all settings” and “lies at the heart of leadership behavior” (p. 5). The work of an educational leader is defined by decision making and “leadership is synonymous with decision making” (Johnson & Kruse, 2009, p. 5). Powley (2009) helps to further bring context to the study’s focus with the stance that organizations today face numerous risks and challenges that can potentially threaten the safety of its members.

Many professional careers and organizations recognize skilled decision makers as a key component to overall success (Johnson & Kruse, 2009). Fortuitously, the literature is rich and the academia tireless, in regards to the topic of leadership decision-making frameworks and processes. This segment of Chapter Two provides a glimpse of decision-making models examined by researchers in the effort to understand the phenomenon of leadership and skilled decision-making.

Whether relying on intuition or a complicated formula, making a decision requires a person to choose between different options or ideas. Saaty (1995) acknowledges the reality that diverse information, the need for compromise, and differing viewpoints can lead to unintended margins of error. Therefore, some issues may require more research and information regarding

the degree to which their decision will impact others (Saaty, 1995). These considerations resonate with my thinking based on my experiences as a school leader for day-to-day problem solving, as well as with crisis events. I believe that there is credence in Saaty's (1995) suggestion that "intuitive thought processes that serve us well in the familiar routine of daily life can mislead us on complicated matters" and suggests that issues be mapped out to align the thoughts and feelings considered when making the initial decision (p. 4). Although when making decisions that do not require technical knowledge, I tend to rely heavily on my instincts, which encompass years of experience, contextual history, and relationships.

Saaty (1995) offers the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) in place of using one's intuition to assist in making sound decisions when faced with difficult issues. The AHP framework involves a series of steps: (1) break down complicated issues into parts or variables, (2) arrange variables into a hierarchic order and assign variables a number based on subjective opinions, and; (3) use the assigned numbers to prioritize variables and place in hierarchic order based on what variables decision makers believe have the greatest or least amount of influence on the outcome of the issue. Examining problems using this organized framework allows people to collaborate and interpret variables of a complex issue in a simplified way and "without straining our innate capabilities" (Saaty, 1995, p. 5).

Although I would argue that using subjective judgments to prioritize the variables in the AHP is still using intuition to make key decisions, as a systems thinker, I can appreciate the opportunities for collaboration and heightened accountability for the implementation of prioritized steps to solve a problem. I also concur with Saaty (1995) that the AHP is a decision-making tool that provides individuals and groups a cohesive, consensual, and consistent way of making decisions.

In contrast to the AHP formulaic model of problem solving, Wilson and Schooler (1991) assert that “analyzing reasons can focus people’s attention on nonoptimal criteria” (p. 181). Their research claim that when faced with a challenging decision, introspection can affect people’s judgment when analyzing multiple factors. As a result, spending an extended amount of time thinking about the pros and cons of each alternative limit their ability to choose between alternatives (Wilson and Schooler, 1991). I tend to agree with this assertion because in retrospect, my experience with crises which allowed for prolonged contemplation and collaboration made me feel more tentative about my final decisions in the aftermath. However, I am fully cognizant that intuitive processes for making decisions decrease the transparency and tangible reasoning expected by some school community members in their quest for heightened accountability when a school is placed in a vulnerable, dangerous, or devastating situation.

Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) cite Wilson and Schooler’s (1991) work regarding the notion that “people make better affective judgments and decisions when they introspect less and do not seek reasons to explain their feelings” (p. 268). The meta-analysis study conducted by Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) speak to “thin slices” or brief observations of expressive behaviors to test if brief exposure or “intuitive and natural judgements and perceptions of others are more accurate than one would expect” (p. 257). The social psychology concept of thin slices incorporates people relying on a thin slice or their narrow window of experiences to make judgments, when meeting people for the first time, when we need to understand something quickly, or when dealing with new situations (Ambady and Rosenthal, 1992). Gladwell (2005) describes thin slices as “a central part of what it means to be human” (p. 43).

Whether or not school leaders use analysis or intuition to guide their decision-making efforts, “issues that are approached with an eye to the uncertainties and ambiguities that define

the work of leaders in educational organizations, work that requires both science and art” (p. 15). As previously stated in this chapter, I rely heavily on my experiential and contextual base as a school leader to seek solutions to complicated issues. Hence, I am a zealous advocate for a decision-making framework that in that distinct moment and space will compel school leaders to ultimately do what they can live with and justify professionally and personally.

School Leader Decision-Making During a School Crisis

“A crisis opens up the fault lines of shame and blame. Who’s at fault? Who failed to anticipate the problem? Who failed to handle the initial stages of the crisis well?” (Allender, 2006, p. 64). Fein and Isaacson (2009) claim that most people feel out of control in the face of crises and such feelings do not disappear upon demand. I can attest to this assertion, as well as share Allender’s (2006) viewpoint that the magnitude of a crisis increases the desire to place blame. Regrettably, public blame only serves to amplify shame and impedes a leader’s ability to solve problem creatively (Allender, 2006). Leaders responsible for making decisions may also experience a “physical storm” of reactions in time of crisis, challenging “deep cultural assumptions about leaders” about their ability to physiologically control their emotions and reactions better than other people during these times (Fein and Isaacson, 2009, p. 1328). In my opinion, the gravity and indignity of public opinion are antecedents of the torrent of emotions that school leaders experience during crises situations. In some cases, rendering leaders traumatized and emotionally paralyzed (Fein and Isaacson, 2009). Ironically, research in the area of crisis management tend to reinforce the supposition of leader rationality and composure during a crisis or major disruption of normal routines. There is also an expectation for leaders to “keep the emotions of others in check” (Fein and Isaacson, 2009, p. 1329).

The phenomenon of emotional work in light of school crisis leadership is based on a sociological concept that “focuses on the interplay between what a person feels and what he or she thinks is appropriate to feel in a certain situation” (Fein and Isaacson, 2009, p. 1329). The Columbine High School shooting yields four lessons of emotional work of school leaders in response to crises: “(1) personal definitions of leadership guided responses to the shooting; (2) the extent that the crisis changed leaders’ work; (3) the high personal toll paid by leaders, and; (4) the change in the sense of what is possible” (p. 1327). These lessons can be applied to other crisis situations less grave, however, equally relevant to school leaders for deep reflection and critical conversations about training and policy changes (Fein & Isaacson, 2009).

Ethical Dilemmas of School Leaders. An ethical dilemma is a complex situation that often involves an apparent mental conflict between moral imperatives, in which to obey one would result in transgressing another (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_dilemma). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) define ethics as “disposition or character, customs, and approved ways of acting” (p. 10). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) outline four types of viewpoints related to ethics: justice, critique, care, and profession as paradigms that influence the educational landscape and leadership. The authors emphasize the ethic of profession due to their contention that “there has been a gap in the educational leadership literature in using the paradigm of professional ethics to help solve moral dilemmas” (p. 10). Particularly since the authors claim that a course in ethics is not required for educational administration, although the interest in the area of educational decision making in regards to ethics was piqued more than two decades ago. In accordance with this claim, the utilization of social media during a crisis situations is a topic worth exploring as an ethical dilemma for school leaders preparing for, in the midst of, and those recovering from a crisis. Similar to school crisis definitions outlined in this study, an organization crisis is

described as “an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs & Holladay, 2011, p. 117). Social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media).

Wright and Hinson (2009) note the prediction that Americans will eventually replace television with social media as their primary news source. Many advantages exist regarding social media’s new and dynamic technologies, such as the ability to broadly communicate with diverse audiences and empower a wide variety of people (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Nonetheless, grounded theory research is limited on the topic of the public’s use of social media regarding crisis information compared to other sources (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). To this point, Roshan, Warren, and Carr (2016) seek more evidence for developing strategies to use social media to communicate with stakeholders during crisis situations. Hawai’i DOE educational leader, Leila Hiyashida recently wrote an article on the topic on social media not being the best way to resolve conflicts with educators. She expressed:

When used properly and respectfully, social media is a great platform for communication between schools and the community. But it also can be used in way that are disruptive and harmful. School administrators or teachers will call parents to work together to resolve conflicts. However, with the rise of social media use, schools are now contending with incidents going viral before people have an opportunity to come to an understanding about them. One side of an incident or someone’s interpretation of it, is shared over and over again on Facebook or Instagram, and what is shared is often incomplete and or misleading. Some media outlets even pick it up and run with it, without explaining the

context or doing any fact-finding. The resulting fallout is often greatly disproportionate to what originally happened. This distortion of conflict is something we need to avoid for the sake of children. (Hiyashida, 2016, p. 44)

I commend Hiyashida for her courageous article. It truly encompasses sentiments that I feel every single time something erroneous gets posted. Even positive events get the attention of people who feel that they need to say something destructive, thus setting off a chain of mixed comments that are often times unfounded and shameless rhetoric. I have grappled with the good and evil of social media in many aspects of my professional capacity as a school leader. On one hand, using a mass messaging system and social media to inform to parents and teachers of emergencies and the school's response to an emergency situation have been an integral component of my crisis team's protocols and our schoolwide emergency action plan.

In contrast, ignoring all media reports and social media posts regarding my school's crisis situations have been a survival tactic seminal to my ability to continue to lead and make decisions and not be distracted by uninformed, speculative, and hurtful opinions. The dangers and disadvantages of social media are credible as my life was once threatened by a student using the medium of social media to express his dismay over a decision I made. Specific Hawai'i DOE school policies in regards to school staff posting updates on their personal social media platforms during crisis situations, are also non-existent. Thus, demonstrating the serious implications of this innovative media tool distinctive to school leaders and their critical role as decision makers. However, possibly crossing the non-so-thin First Amendment freedom of speech line. Hiyashida (2016) adds, "When adults take to social media because they disapprove of school decisions, it send a message to students that only one opinion matters, and the more "likes" and "shares" you get, the more validation you earn" (p. 44).

To this specific point, Coombs and Holladay (2011) highlight the critical nature of crisis responsibility as “one of the factors that affect key organizational outcomes such as perceptions of organizational reputation and intentions to engage in negative word-of-mouth communication” (p. 117). The work of Jin, Liu, and Austin (2014) adds more context to the use of social media debate using the social-mediated crisis communication model to examine the following factors related social media and other sources when dealing with crises: (1) publics respond to internal crisis origin and external crisis origin in light of the key factors which impact peoples’ belief of how they prefer organizations to respond to a crisis and how they feel in response to crisis information; (2) peoples’ “preferred information form (social media, traditional media, or word-of-mouth communication) and source (organization in crisis or third party)” (p. 75), and; (3) how people create, use, and share crisis information; via social media and other sources.

The factors above give school leaders discussion points in regards to incorporating social media technologies as part of their problem solving, as well as anticipating peoples’ expected responses to the origin of crises. The author agrees with the claim that “a crisis situation is a mosaic composed of many different variables” and that “the better we understand the audience perception factors, the more effective crisis managers will be at anticipating stakeholder reactions and selecting a crisis response to “fit” with those reactions (Coombs and Holladay, 2011, p. 119). Moreover, the findings and recommendations of these researchers’ work allow school leaders an even a deeper look into the phenomenon, societal norms, and ethical dilemmas of social media and its relationship to decision-making and crisis management in an organization.

School Leaders Reflect on Crises

Few can argue that reflection and hindsight are at its optimum immediately after a crisis. This deep reflection is shared by educators who experienced the September 11, 2001 devastation of the New York City Twin Towers attack. After rising from the ashes of their own personal desolation, their professional response to the tragedy surprised the New York educators as they discovered institutional strengths and a surge of commitment to innovative teaching to promote societal change (Lent, Rose, Stuart-Hunt, Edstrom, Rothschild, Weisman, Delacorte, Vascellaro, & Abell, 2003). The educators use stories, poems, and instructional lessons for their personal healing journey and to help their students process the tragic event (Lent et al., 2003).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (U.S DOE) (2006), a southern city community of educators were compelled to share their story through a step-by-step emergency management planning guide due to their lack of preparedness in response to the deaths of middle school students who crashed their car into a tree. While a Virginia Tech professor is left perplexed after the horrific 2007 shootings and questions the university's lack of crisis plan and its ability to respond to the community and "maintain a safe space so that students can encounter ideas of all sorts, learn, and grow" (Goldstein, 2012, p. 2).

All three stories speak to the hope of school leaders and the hope in school leaders to gain knowledge from their fresh contextual experiences and motivate them to reflect upon and course correct future planning and decision-making efforts before, during, and after a crisis. Nathan and Kovoov-Misra (2002) note that during secondhand or vicarious learning, "a crisis represents an opportunity instead of a threat" (p. 246). Their research in the arena of vicarious learning confirms that "crises serve to make errors and contradictions in existing behavior more visible and to highlight what needs to be improved" (p. 245). I can attest to the value of convening as a

team to repeat or rethink procedures related to firsthand crisis situations, as well as critical lessons that vicarious events can teach us (Nathan & Kovoov-Misra, 2002, p. 246).

The contents of this chapter help to clarify and highlight the knowledge and theory related to the social, cultural, and psychological significances of the study through the synthesis of multiple sources of literature and viewpoints. The knowledge and insight gained through the researcher's perspectives and interpretations serve as a catalyst for continued learning.

Particularly, in reference to the responsibility of Hawai'i DOE leadership in the area of policy development and standard procedures to support school leaders' and promote school community awareness critical to student safety, well-being, and crisis management.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines how research for this study addressed its purpose and research questions through qualitative inquiry design, data collection, and analysis themes (Patton, 2002). The qualitative research methods of narrative inquiry and autoethnography were used with the goal of intersecting the two perspectives to interpret life experiences and the meaning people have made through them, through the idea of “story” (Patton, 2002). This chapter includes the study’s context based on key definitions, the selection of the participants, and the participants’ professional background and school profiles. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors of influence during school leaders' decision making in the midst and aftermath of a significant school crisis.” The overarching research question generated by the study’s purpose is, What factors influence a school leader’s decision-making in the face of a school crisis?

Supporting questions focused on the following variables related to a school leader’s decision-making before and after a significant school crisis: the significance of a decision-making framework or process, the overall influence of school community members, experiences with ethical dilemmas, a school leaders’ preparedness, and professional and personal implications for school leaders in the aftermath of a significant school crisis. The study’s participants and author had the opportunity answer these seminal questions through their personal accounts and recollections of leading and making decisions through a crisis event.

Context

When considering sample size for a qualitative study, Creswell (2013) suggests that researchers gather extensive information about each participant and avoid generalizing their individual information for qualitative research methodology. The participants of the study were

selected according to the author's prior knowledge of their experiences with a significant school crisis through the media and professional networking. Study participants include two Hawai'i DOE public school leaders and the author. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) a current or retired Hawai'i DOE public school leader, and; 2) a school leader who was ultimately responsible for providing leadership and decision-making during and in the aftermath of a significant school crisis.

For this study, a significant school crisis is defined as an unexpected event that involved students or staff members, disrupted normal school business, was prolonged, and went public via the media. A school leader is defined as the principal of the school. There were no age, gender, ethnicity, or years of service stipulations for participants selected for this study. The participants are portrayed as Principal Character A, Principal Character B, and the author. Pseudonyms are assigned to the two participants to protect their identity. The study's participants and the author are female. Two male school leaders were identified as potential participants, however, the author was not able to secure their participation in the study. The description of the participants' profiles in the following section will help to establish the participants' background.

Principal Character A

Principal Character A is currently the principal of an O'ahu Hawai'i DOE public intermediate school. According to the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E), her 25 plus years of teaching experience include elementary, intermediate, and high school levels. She also has at least five years of experience as a vice principal. All of Principal Character A's teaching and administration experiences were in public school settings. Other educational experiences highlighted by the questionnaire include a few years spent working at the state or district level. Principal Character A's principal experience encompasses 15 to 20

years at the intermediate and high school levels. She has 31 total years as a school administrator and the duration of her administration training program was one year.

At the time of the significant school crisis that Principal Character A described, she was the principal of an O‘ahu high school with the enrollment of 1,736 students. According to the 2008 School Status Improvement Report (SSIR), the predominant ethnic groups at this school represented 39.4% Hawaiian and Native Hawaiian, 20.8% White, 13.3% Samoan, and a combined 38.3% of students comprised of 10 ethnicities and the category of Other. Additional demographic data for the school included 45% of students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch, 12% of students receiving Special Education services, and 3.3% of limited English Proficiency students. Certificated personnel included 121 teachers, eight administrators, two librarians, and one principal in the past five years (School Status Improvement Report, 2007-2008).

The school is the hub of the community and the student population hails from six feeder elementary schools across 26 miles. This intermediate and high school was founded in 1897 and has a long history of students who are recipients of numerous state and national titles in academics, performing arts, and athletics. Students are afforded an array of career pathways, as well as health and music learning center opportunities. The school is known for their environmental efforts and partnerships, as well as an on-site health center. The school is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and receives Title I federal funding due to a high percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch benefits. The school was also recognized by U.S. News and World Report as a top American High School in the bronze category (School Status Improvement Report, 2007-2008).

Principal Character B

Principal Character B is currently the principal of a Hawai'i DOE public high school on O'ahu. School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) data indicate that Principal Character B has between 10 and 15 years of teaching experience at the intermediate and high school levels. She also has between five and ten years of experience as a vice principal. All of Principal Character B's teaching and administration experiences were spent in public school settings. Other educational experiences highlighted by the questionnaire include a few years spent working at the state or district level. Principal Character A's principal experience encompasses 5 to 10 years at the intermediate and high school levels. Her school administrator career spans over 16 years and the duration of her administration training program was two years.

At the time of the significant school crisis identified, Principal Character B was the principal of an O'ahu elementary school with the enrollment of 465 students. According to the 2008 School Status Improvement Report (SSIR), the predominant ethnic groups at this school represented 15.0% Native Hawaiian, 61.5% White, and a combined 22.29% of students comprised of the category of Other, multiple, or two or more ethnicities. Additional demographic data for the school included 33.9% of students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch, 8.6% of students receiving Special Education services, and 3% of limited English Proficiency students. Certificated personnel included 31 teachers, three administrators, a half-time librarian, and one principal in the past five years (School Status Improvement Report, 2014–2015).

The school serves preschool to sixth-grade students and was established in 1973. The standards-based academic program infuses art and technology into instructional practices and student products. Fourth through sixth graders are offered an enrichment program in the areas of

math and science. An active PTCA (Parent Teacher Community Association), School Community Council, and community partnerships provide volunteer assistance and financial support to the school. The school has achieved “in good standing” status under the No Child Left Behind federal requirements and “Continuous Improvement” status under the Strive HI Performance System (School Status Improvement Report, 2014–2015).

Author

The author is currently the principal of a Hawai‘i DOE public high school on the island of O‘ahu. School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) data indicate that the author has between five and ten years of teaching experience at the elementary, intermediate and high school levels. She also served as a vice principal for three years and worked at the state or district level for nine years. All of the author’s teaching and administration experiences were in public school settings. Her administration career includes five years as a principal for intermediate and high school levels, rounding off a total of 17 years in administration positions. The author’s administration training program was completed in one year.

At the time of the significant school crisis identified, the author was the principal of an O‘ahu intermediate and high school with the enrollment of 1,559 students. According to the 2010–2011 School Status Improvement Report (SSIR), the predominant ethnic groups at this school represented 40% Native Hawaiians, 20.7% White, 13.5% Samoan, and a combined 23.02% of students comprised of 13 other ethnicities and those students identified as having multiple, or two or more ethnicities. Additional demographic data for the school included 33.9% of students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch, 8.6% of students receiving Special Education services, and 3% of limited English Proficiency students. Certificated personnel included 24.5

teachers, six administrators, a full-time librarian, and two principals in the past five years (School Status Improvement Report, 2010–2011).

The school has served generations of students and was recently accredited by the WASC. Each individual is recognized as having inherent worth and the talent to become a dedicated and lifelong learner. This intermediate and high school excels in athletics and academic co-curricular activities. Family engagement is essential to the success of students, as well as community partnerships (School Status Improvement Report, 2010–2011).

The context of the study's participants is important to provide the backdrop for the design, data collection, and analysis of the multiple sources of information synthesized and interpreted through the implementation of qualitative research. The use of this type of empirical methodology provides a distinct and practical lens that centers on the purpose of the study and closely examines the factors that influence school leaders' decision making, before and after significant school crises.

The qualitative approach also allows for systematic inquiry and the channels to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). To this end, this study incorporates the qualitative methodologies of narrative inquiry and autoethnography to help uncover the answer to the main research inquiry of the factors influence a school leader's decision-making and leadership in the face of a school crisis. In analyzing the data from the participant interviews the author's goal was to discover several supporting questions that quire a school leader's (1) decision-making framework in response to a school crisis; (2) experience with school community members during a school crisis; (3) ethical dilemmas during a school

crisis; (4) preparedness for a school crisis, and; (5) the short-term and long-term professional, personal, and emotional implications for school leaders in the aftermath of school crisis.

Design

The naturalistic inquiry design strategy was used for this study to enable the researcher to be open to information that surfaces regarding real-world situations (Patton, 2002). With this design, open-ended questions are utilized and participants are interviewed in familiar settings. Patton (2002) notes, whatever data collected are viewed as vital to the understanding of the participant's experience. This design accommodates the research method of narrative inquiry as school leaders' personal experiences are examined through the lens of their stories as a source of significant understanding and knowledge for the study (Clandinin, 2013). It also allows the autoethnographic inquiry model to highlight the unique voice of the researcher and affords a portal for self-reflection (Chang, 2008). These qualitative methodologies serve to collect and interpret the author's and other school leaders' personal stories of reminiscent events relative to specific past experiences. The study's emphasis on interpretation and context through narrative inquiry and autoethnography (Patton, 2002) informs the hermeneutical perspective through the in-depth text interpretation of the participants' and author's stories.

Data Collection

The qualitative data strategy was used through in-depth interviews about personal experiences (Patton, 2002). Data collection instruments for the study included a six-question School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) and a face-to-face individual interview guided by 15 open-ended questions. Participants had the option of completing the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) prior to the individual interview session or at the interview session. The School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) was developed

by the researcher and consisted of questions specific to years of experience in positions such as a teacher, vice principal, state/district, and a school leader. The questionnaire also included items related to the years of experience in elementary, intermediate, and high school levels; as well as years spent as educators in public, charter, and independent schools. Participants were also asked to specify the duration of their administrative training program, how long they worked as a Hawai'i DOE school administrator, and to indicate their current position and school level.

The individual interviews were based on Patton's (2002) standardized open-ended interview. This interview format limited the variation of the questions to maximize the one hour timeframe for the interview sessions. The standardization of the interview questions also helped to simplify the analysis of the participants' responses to the questions. The interview questions included a balance of experience and behavior, opinion and values, feeling, and knowledge questions. One hour was slated for the individual interview session and each session was audio-recorded then transcribed. The author was also interviewed using the individual interview questions (Appendix F) and completed the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E). Both the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) answers and the individual interview transcripts were collected and analyzed as part of the study.

Participants were provided consent forms to participate in the interviews. It was made clear that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Every precaution was taken by the researcher to protect confidentiality and keep individual participants and their school or former school anonymous. The participants' real identities were replaced with coded identities and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The author also collected data from multiple sources including state and national statistics, school level documents such as media reports, newspaper articles, Hawai'i DOE documents, and websites.

Data Analysis

The voice, perspective, and reflexivity strategy was used for this study to enable the researcher to assume a credible and authentic voice, while depicting a self-reflective and understanding view of real-life events (Patton, 2002). The first part of the data analysis process involved the coding of information gleaned from the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E). This information helped to provide a panoramic view of the study's participants' and author's overall experiences with dealing with crises. Next, the individual interview transcripts were sorted by repetitive phrases, thoughts, and words according to the school leaders' responses to the interview questions. The author's transcripts and background information were included in this process to provide consistency, more depth, and dimension to the study.

The synthesis and analysis of the first and second round of coding of the three school leaders' responses helped to highlight data patterns, key themes, sub themes, and outliers integral to the study's findings and discussions of this study in Chapter Five. The transcripts were then categorized using the literary framework of Protasis, Epitasis, Catastrophe, and Epilogue, introduced in Chapter One to help give the participants' stories more clarity and fluidity. These categorized data were reviewed several times to help generate, examine, and identify key and sub themes.

The themes extrapolated from the data analysis were germane to the interpretations and implications of this study. This information also helped to address the purpose and research

questions of this study; as well as identify possible implications, recommendations, and next steps related to the school leaders' stories about their leadership and decision-making in the throes and aftermath of a significant school crisis.

Credibility

The credibility or internal validity of a study serves to check whether its findings are credible and aligned with reality (Merriam, 2009). In the effort to ensure the trustworthiness of the study's interpretation of the data the participants were provided the opportunity to member check or review their interview transcripts to check for inaccuracies, clarify ideas, and verify information (Glesne, 2016). These member checks were conducted shortly after the recorded interviews were transcribed and no changes were required during this process.

In addition to guidance and support from Dissertation Committee members relevant to the stages of academic writing, a peer debriefer reviewed the study to help ensure its dependability and conformability of the research process (Glesne, 2016). The individual who conducted this peer review or examination (Merriam, 2009), is a fellow doctorate candidate, educator, and was a school community member at the time of the significant school crisis shared by the study's author. The multiple viewpoints of the peer debriefer further bolsters the conformity of this study and assures the value of the data and that the findings parallel what really occurred as recalled by the researcher.

Transferability

The transferability or the external validation of a study hinges on its level of application to other situations (Merriam, 2009). The generalizability of the participants' personal narratives of this study may not lend to a high degree of transferability. However, the author's detailed data descriptions and extrapolated findings may resonate, if not contribute, to a bank of knowledge

critical to a distinct population of educators who deal with the unpredictable and serious social phenomenon of school crises. Glesne (2016) notes that a study's transferability and dependability ensures that the interpretations and findings are transferable between the author and the participants (Glesne, 2016). The use of the standardized data collection instruments such as the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) and the individual interview open-ended questions (Appendix F) served to triangulate the data sources of this study. The peer review of the study's findings based on the data further helped to augment the transferability of this study.

Limitations

Though the positionality of the author as a school leader gives credence and authenticity to the study through an autoethnography lens, however, also presents a paradoxical limitation that may be perceived as a threat to the study's objectivity. The study's trustworthiness is also compromised by the author's positionality and potential bias given the author's connection to the setting and focus of the study. Perceptions about the author's current role as a school leader may generate inquiries such as the author's motive for conducting this study. Another ethical danger regarding the author's positionality is the decision to conduct a study that closely examines and resurfaces events and issues that were devastating to a school community. Thus, the author's judgment to disregard a school community's privacy and inviolable history may raise questions of integrity and selfless personal gain.

Although Creswell (2013) states that many examples of narrative research include one or two participants, the number of participants represented in this study may be viewed as a limitation. The three school leaders involved in this study represents less than two percent of the total number of school leaders in the Hawai'i DOE public school system. This stark ratio may

weaken the study's credibility and transferability, falling short of its intent to inform the current and future professional practices of school leaders on a broader scale in the area of leadership and decision-making in response to significant school crises. In addition, the absence of personal narratives from male school leaders may be considered a limitation.

Lastly, the crises events portrayed in this study may not resonate with present school leaders depending on their definition of a significant school crisis in light of the increasing danger level of violent acts by children and young adults on and off the nation's school campuses, thus limiting the transferability of this study.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter further delves into the study's problem statement and research questions by presenting the findings generated by the design, data collection, and data analysis in Chapter Three. These findings examine the data and interpretations from the participant interviews and identify key themes and patterns of school leaders' decision-making during and after a significant school crisis. This chapter also echoes the literary elements of the Protasis, Epitasis, Catastrophe, and Epilogue introduced in Chapter One, to continue to help frame the personal stories of the study's participants and the author.

The Protasis: The Story of a School Leader

Principal Character A. Principal Character A shared her story about how she made decisions as a school leader during a significant school crisis that involved the health and safety of her entire school. In May of 2008, Principal Character A received a call from teacher letting her know that pesticide appeared to be wafting over to the top part of the campus and recalled that it was a regular school day and everyone was on campus. Principal Character A assumed that the source of the chemical smell was a nearby grass turf company located less than a half mile away and figured that the pesticide was probably poisonous. She took immediate action and "went up there and determined that there was a smell of pesticide." Unfortunately, the chemical smell did not dissipate right away, prompting Principal Character A to start making decisions in light of a significant school crisis that lasted for approximately two weeks.

Principal Character B. The story of Principal Character B leading her school during a significant school crisis is based on the sudden and unexpected death of a Kindergarten teacher. The teacher lived in the community and had young children of her own. Principal Character B

shared that because their community was so small, the news of the teacher's death quickly spread. The death occurred over the weekend after the family made the difficult decision to remove the teacher from life support. Principal Character B noted that "it took two to three days to address the crisis, but the impact had affected the school and community until the end of that year."

Author. According to the author, her crisis event occurred at the beginning of November 2010. The situation started with the author self-reporting the ineligibility of one of her football players. When the author first got the news of the possible infraction she immediately asked the school registrar to check on the information and was told that the student in question was ineligible. With the information verified, the author called her CAS to inform her that she was going to self-report an athletic student ineligibility to Oahu Interscholastic Association (OIA). It was the author's understanding that the only way that an OIA violation for a school could be formally brought to light was if the principal reported it. The author strongly believed that self-reporting was the right and principled thing to do. She also knew that this was a high stakes decision because her school was scheduled to compete in the OIA playoffs in a few days.

The Epitasis: The Spirit of a School Leader

Principal Character A. The first thing that Principal Character A did in response to her crisis was move everyone from the upper campus, where the initial report originated, down to the lower campus. According to Principal Character A, the pesticide quickly drift throughout the entire campus. She started moving students down to the gym and dismissed everyone from that location since the incident happened towards the end of the school day. The primary factor for Principal Character A to make the decision to evacuate the whole school and close the campus, was for "the safety of students." According to Principal Character A, this meant that "once we

cleared the campus, then we didn't open it again until we could determine that the pesticide was completely dissipated.” Fortunately, students were not scheduled to be on campus the day after the pesticide odor was first detected due to a professional development day for teachers.

Principal Character A expressed that she kept smelling the pesticide on campus therefore she “wasn't comfortable bringing students back on campus” when they were scheduled to return.

Principal Character A also stated:

I would walk to the upper campus, and I would breathe, and if my throat got scratchy, then I determined that there was still pesticide on campus. I refused to open school, even though I was getting pressure from the communications branch and the deputy superintendent to open school.

In terms of a decision-making model or framework, Principal Character A implemented a “simple model.” She shared that:

Once it was determined that we had a problem, then we looked at alternatives, and then we implemented an alternative. As the situation changed, at some point when we determined that the pesticide was gone, then I think I just did my own debriefing with myself. I made a filing system and kept all of the documents.

Principal Character B. Principal Character B had very little time to prepare for the Monday after the weekend that her teacher passed away. She was up all night with the family and friends of the teacher and now she had to address the tragedy with her school community. Principal Character B recalled:

That morning everybody was crying and in tears. Some people, they could kind of hold it together, but others were just completely distraught, so I tried to just rally everybody together. For the sake of the kids, we've just got to hold it together, which is difficult.

Foremost on Principal Character B's mind, was "students first," especially since she had to figure out how she was going to get ready for the Kindergarten teacher's class coming back to school the next day.

She mused, "They're so young. They don't really understand the whole concept of death. How do you handle that situation with these youngsters and prepare them for, you know, she's not going to come back?"

In response to the interview question related to implementing a decision-making process when managing the crisis, Principal Character B stated:

Based on our previous training, at your school you kind of establish a crisis team, or a team that you know is going to respond. It's pretty much a team leader, so usually it's your administrative staff, your counselors. There could be a school behavioral health specialist that we had access to at that time, and then of course letting our CAS know what's going on so that they can help support students get additional resources from the district. That was important. Just calling all of those key players together that morning to say, this is what the plan is going to be for the day.

Principal Character B also shared:

You don't really have that many staff, or additional support staff, so it was pretty much me, and then I had a vice principal at the time and I had a School-Based Behavioral Health (SBBH) counselor and a grade level counselor. It was pulling them together.

The CAS also provided Principal Character B assistance from the district support staff which included school psychologists and school behavioral health specialists from other schools.

Principal B recalled her experience below:

Everybody convened early that morning to discuss what the plan was. I got input from some of the counselors as far as what is appropriate to tell our staff, and it was really just saying be as factual as possible but then also be respectful of the family. What information can you release, and just kind of giving them a heads-up.

Principal Character B felt that it was paramount to emphasize her following memories:

We've got to be here for the kids, be strong for the kids, but at the same time, you have additional SBBH support staff or counselors who are going to be walking through each classroom, checking in on teachers, and then making sure students that are distraught or need counseling, could come out of class and talk to the counselors. That was basically what we did that morning. Because the teacher's family was from the community, many parents had already shared the news with their children.

According to Principal Character B:

Parents were already comforting one another, comforting the kids, trying to prepare them for that next day. That day when we had to go into that kindergarten class to talk to the kids about what had happened, we invited the parents to come in with us, so that was huge because they were able to sit in there next to their child. We explained the situation, and we just let them comfort their child. Then I think some other kids, they didn't really get it. They're just thinking she's away, and then she'll come back because she was pregnant before, so she was away. They were just thinking, "Oh when is she going to come back?" It was nice that the parents were there to just follow up and be there with their kids for as long as they needed to that day. They just kind of rallied around that classroom. That was helpful.

In the aftermath of the crisis, Principal Character B shared that everybody rallied together for the entire week. There were also gatherings and a fundraiser “to help support the now single parent, the father. He's raising these kids.” A garden was also dedicated to the teacher because of her work with the community gardens in the school. Principal Character B also noted the existence of “long term support” for this family.

Author. The author did not utilize a specific decision-making structure or framework for her decision-making related to self-reporting because her decision was clear cut. She followed her CAS’ lead to determine her next steps. The first thing she did was gather the facts, made sure she reviewed them, then documented. She discovered that an anonymous call was made to another school’s Athletic Director and this person told him that one of our boys were ineligible. The author went through the transcripts again and discussed her findings with her Athletic Director and football head coach. She was confident that she had enough information so she followed the procedures and made the report.

The Catastrophe: The Heartbreak of a School Leader

Principal Character A. While already dealing with the angst and complications that come with dealing with a school crisis, Principal Character A’s problem was compounded by the following dilemma:

The Department of Education was pressuring me to open school, but then I felt like if I could still go up to the upper campus and feel the pesticide in my throat, that I didn't think we were ready to open school. While not everybody was affected, the students who were really sensitive to pesticides would be affected. I think I was sensitive to it because I had been in it for so long that my throat was already exposed, and so it was scratchy.

According to Principal Character A, her community members' "horrified" reaction to the pesticide overspray impacted her decision-making. She stated, "Knowing that their kids were exposed, I wanted to be certain that there was no pesticide remaining. I refused to open the campus until I could make that determination." She also recalled a parent's concern about their child getting sick at a restaurant due to the pesticide, even though it was a few days later. Hence, this further reiterated her fear of allowing students back on campus and exposing them to the pesticide again. Principal Character A informed parents of the type of pesticide that was used and what the potential side effects of the pesticide were. Principal Character A tried to get someone to come to her school to no avail. She reflected that she should have called the Governor or involved a legislator to get the help that she really needed. However, she may have gotten into trouble if she did that. According to Principal Character A:

It wasn't until the DOE was perturbed about her decision to close the school for so many days that they sent someone out to the school from the pesticide branch. In their wake, she expected there to be more follow up. Perhaps a team to collect the school's documentation related to the incident. Such a team could help anyone else who has a pesticide issue, what worked, what didn't work, and here's all of the forms. I still have the forms on my computer. No one's ever asked for them. There was never time to debrief. What will we do the next time, for another school? I feel like everyone should start there, to manage this type of crisis on their own.

Principal Character A still thinks about her exposure to the pesticide and having to go to the upper campus and take in deep breaths every day. She shared, "I always wonder what the long term effects of that will be. I am still really sensitive to pesticides now. It's almost like it burned

the hairs in my throat. There's certain smells that I can just really feel that same tickling in my throat.”

Principal Character B. Another facet of the crisis that Principal Character B had to address was the reaction of her faculty and staff to the tragic event. She shared that because her school is small, there’s a “family type of culture.” She also noted, “It's so tight knit in that community and I thought, how am I going to prepare for teachers? They're so close. The loss of their colleague and their friend not being there the next day, so they were very traumatized.” A dilemma that Principal Character B faced during this crisis was, deciding what she could communicate to her staff. She recalled:

You still have to be respectful to the family and do what their wishes are, so what can you communicate versus what you're not going to communicate? Then, on top of that, it was social media because everything nowadays gets out via social media.

According to Principal Character B, “Misinformation was actually getting posted, so just being sensitive of that was a lot to deal with.” Principal Character B also had the responsibility of preparing for getting communication out to the parents of her students. She stated:

How are you going to let the parents know? There's no letter. You're going to have to craft this letter, and then what do I say in the letter? Then what kinds of things should we be covering in the meeting? I just seriously Googled stuff and threw it together, to just kind of give me something to go in with.

Additional events that Principal Character B had to manage during this crisis were parents, community members, and former students coming to the school asking questions and conflict amongst staff members regarding how individuals were responding to the crisis. Principal Character B recalled:

Everybody has their own way of processing and dealing with death. Some were completely traumatized and crying. Some kind of laughed and giggled, or they make stupid jokes that were inappropriate, but it's just their way of coping. The staff were getting on each other's cases.

Principal Character B asked her staff to not “take it out on other people because they're not responding the way you would respond. It's just their way of dealing with the situation, a very traumatic situation.” She recalled the staff members who had a delayed reaction to the crisis and had a hard time holding it together and slowly started breaking down. These were teachers who ate lunch and collaborated daily with the teacher who passed away. Just walking past her classroom was difficult for some teachers. Principal Character B was understanding of these reactions and provided substitutes for staff members who needed to take time off to heal. The last semester of the school year was a difficult one for all.

Principal Character B believed that one of the challenges of making decisions during and after a crisis is that a school leader has to ultimately make the final decisions in the “heat of the moment.” Thus, she expressed that this almost makes it necessary to desensitize yourself and “you kind of have to cut yourself off from the emotional side of it and keep your composure.” Another challenge identified by Principal Character B in a crisis situation is having to handle many different tasks at the same time, it could be writing a letter, consulting with emergency responders, and talking to parents. According to Principal Character B:

Your mind is just going, going, going because you've got to get all of these things done, and they have to be done in a timely manner. That's very challenging, especially in an elementary because it's pretty much just you.

In addition, Principal Character B noted that, “You may or may not have that support staff. I think that's the most challenging part. Just getting that support. Just knowing who that person is.”

Principal Character B does not feel as if she were prepared for this crisis. She noted:

I don't think you're ever fully prepared. I think that particular incident, I don't think I've ever imagined myself being in that situation with the death of an employee, and then having to have it just so immediate and quickly. For me, I didn't feel like I was prepared just with the information that I would have needed, so like I said, I was like Googling stuff to kind of help me at least get some kind of grasp on what I needed to do, or what I should say, what is appropriate.

The lack of training for a crisis situation was also noted by Principal Character B:

You used to get a lot of training before in crisis situations, and we don't get that anymore, so that's kind of interesting too. We've got to kind of rely on what we have at our school level or within our district, but I don't think anybody from outside DOE. When I think of crisis management, we get the emergency response drills, like if there's a bomb threat or an intruder on campus lock down, but nothing like that. I mean, nothing to that degree, so it was very different. I didn't receive any training on how to handle that situation. To be proactive and be prepared for that situation, I didn't have any training. I think you're just kind of reflecting on prior incidents in regards to you know you're going to have to respond immediately and you know you're going to have to communicate with the various role groups what's going on and you know you've got to provide support, but as far as how to do those things specifically, no. I was just kind of doing the best that I could at that time, and then really relying on some other experts, right? The counselors, SBBH and school psychologists that's their job, so I think going to those people to help support

me in making the decisions. Knowing that there was a crisis team at the district level was important to be aware of as a school leader because, “it's not going to be if it's going to happen. It's going to be when it's going to happen, so if we know that the crisis is going to be inevitable, then what is that team and what is that protocol for accessing the support?”

Principal Character B also believes that school leaders need “more ongoing PD or just support or training on how to deal with these types of situations because we used to get it, and now we don't.” She emphasized, “Especially from the emotional side of death or suicide. I don't even know how I would deal with that. We're so used to operational stuff.” Principal Character B shared that the emotional impact of her experience was hard. She reiterated:

It's just hard as a leader because you have to be strong for everybody else, and you're just trying to hold it together. In the moment you kind of have to separate yourself from what's going on to get through it. Just to do all the damage control, and then I don't know. Even after, you're still trying to help be supportive to teachers and students. I don't know. It was just crazy. That was really crazy.

Author. An ethical dilemma for the author was that an OIA member tried to talk her out of self-reporting. She already felt bad about having to self-report and thought it was unprofessional and highly unethical for someone in that position to try to change her mind. Another ethical dilemma was the author appealing the OIA principals' decision to uphold their decision to forfeit her football games. The author heard stories that going against the establishment was not advised and rarely ever done. In the end, she chose to support her school community by appealing and felt alienated by the OIA members because of this decision. A few months after the incident, one of the founders of the OIA was invited to speak to the principals and the athletic directors about the history of the OIA. The author was suspicious of the timing of

the meeting and felt as if her predicament initiated the meeting. Perhaps she was being paranoid, however, still felt ostracized because of her decisions to support her school community.

The parents and the community members had an emergency meeting and a rally. The author and her CAS attended the meeting and tried their best to answer the questions. She was only able to share the next steps in the appeals process. Some people wanted to discuss their theories about the identity of the anonymous caller who reported that the school had an eligible player; and some asked about the identity of the ineligible player. This was upsetting to the author because the student's mom was present and the student was not to blame for this situation. It was a priority for the author to protect the student's identity. At the rally, hundreds of people lined the streets in front of the school with t-shirts and signs depicting the mantra, "Let the Boys Play."

The OIA members voted twice within a few days of the author self-reporting; upholding their forfeiture decision. The timeline was tight because the OIA playoffs were scheduled on the Friday after the author self-reported. The author was told that she could bring football boys to the appeals session to testify on the football team's behalf, however, they were not allowed in the OIA office when they got there and had to remain outside and wait for the decision. This was really difficult for the author and the students to accept because the students were counting on being able to address the OIA principals and tell their story. The OIA principals voted to deny the author's appeal. The ride home was very difficult. The students wanted to know which principals voted against the school and the author had to explain to them that individual principals were not allowed to share any voting information outside of the OIA meetings. She told them that when there's a majority decision, we all own it. There was no conceivable way that she could have prepared for this ride home.

When they got to the school, the students and the author were immediately ushered to the field where the entire school was sitting on the bleachers waiting for the author to address them. She was completely overwhelmed because this was unexpected and wished that she had a prepared statement to read. She remembers feebly telling everyone that the OIA principals voted against them, they lost the appeal, and that they would not be playing. That was all that the author could really say even if she was prepared.

Shortly after the OIA decision, the author was told that a few people suggested that she get her own lawyer and take the OIA to court in the hopes that a judge would rule to suspend the OIA appeals decision so they could play in the playoffs. Even if they lost the case and were stripped of the title, the main thing was that the boys were able to play. The author was strongly advised not to even consider this option and risk jeopardizing her job. A couple of the players' parents retained a lawyer and assured the author that this was not personal. The author was subpoenaed and testified in court. Sadly, the judge did not overturn the appeal or grant an injunction.

The author knew that her decision affected many people, especially the students. They were being penalized for something that they had no control over and it was not their fault. The author notes that other schools' athletic programs on O'ahu were probably impacted by our school not playing in the playoffs due to lower proceeds from ticket sales, advertisements, concessions, and other vendor sales. Throughout the whole ordeal, the author didn't read the newspaper or watch the news, however, knew that she was in the thick of things. She remembers calling her grandma and grandpa to tell that they were probably going to see her on the news, but not to worry about her. She told them that she was okay, even though she wasn't.

Professionally, the author believes that subsequent school crises—unexpected student deaths, public outrage of felled tree, and the threat of explosive devices challenged her decision making, her level of confidence, and distorted her identity as a school leader. After the author self-reported, it was hard for her emotionally because she knew that the football boys, especially the seniors, would not have a shot at playing in the championship game. Personally, she was equally affected because her work was an integral part of her life.

The Epilogue: The Hope of a School Leader

Principal Character A. When asked to highlight a strength regarding her leadership and decision making in response to her significant school crisis, Principal Character A stated, “Me as a leader.” She also attributed “an abundance of caution” as one of her strengths, as well as knowing that she “put safety first.” To this point, Principal Character A recollected:

I really believed the pesticide was still on campus because I was feeling the effects of it. I felt like I knew what to do. We knew how to do the initial evacuation, then we knew how to do next steps and how to inform the various school groups. Just like every day, I knew how to make a decision and felt like I knew what I needed to do. I think my decision-making ability and handling of a crisis--we were prepared for that, but I don't think I was prepared for really understanding pesticides and how to test pesticides and make a decision about the level of a pesticide on campus and having students return to campus and teachers. I think it was effective, because we were able to keep students safe and not have a recurrence. I think for the bigger picture, there have been attempts to limit pesticide spraying around schools. I know the legislature has gotten involved.

Principal Character A knew how to handle a crisis and manage a school closure, but could not effectively assess pesticides. Albeit, the experience provided for professional growth in the area

of resources, crisis management, and decision-making related to the crisis. Principal Character A noted that although she was the one who made the decision about closing the school, she consulted with the CAS. The CAS approved this decision and was responsible for informing the Superintendent.

Principal Character B. The strengths that Principal Character B noted throughout her dealing with her school crisis included:

Really strong relationships with people and your community, then they're always going to rally around you to help support you. That was a positive because even people that came from other schools, like I had a really strong relationship with them, so coming in was just automatic. They just kind of helped to pick up the slack. There were just there, you know? They went above and beyond, and came back the next couple of days just to check in and make sure the teachers and the students were okay.

Principal Character B also noted the support of district level resources and the community in addition to the positive relationships amongst the school community members. She shared that they really helped the school to minimize the traumatic experience for the kids.” Principal Character B also gave credence to having a “solid plan.” She involved “a lot of different people, and these people were knowledgeable of how to handle those situations. That's their job as counselors. Then working as a team was helpful in minimizing the impact of that crisis in our school.” Professionally, Principal Character B expressed that the experience helped her to refocus and realize, "I've got to move on. I've been here.” She reflected:

I experienced this at an elementary level, and for me, it was like needing to move on and pursue my own dreams or passions. It kind of motivated me in that sense. That experience of going through that experience as a whole, I think it made me stronger as a

leader, and made me more aware of these things that can happen at any time, so you better have those resources in your back pocket to whip out.”

Principal Character B also commented on how important it is for school leaders to share information with each other, “because that very next year when we came right back, they had another teacher pass away, so it's like how can we help support one another because you know that's not an isolating incident.” She also believed that “what we need to do is work together more so you don't feel as a principal that you're overloaded and overwhelmed, and in it alone.”

Author. The author had a lot of moral support from her CAS and invaluable technical support from the complex area investigator who was also a lawyer. The empathy and acknowledgement of another OIA member knowing how difficult it was for the author to make the decisions that she made meant a lot to the author. A few years after the crisis, the author bumped into one of her retired teachers and he told her, “I was just telling somebody about that day you walked across the field and addressed the school regarding that football deal. You were really awesome that day.” Even though the author did not agree with him, it was heartening to hear these sentiments years later. This encounter made the author think of the students that were affected by her decision to self-report and like a thousand times before, hoped that they understood why she had to do what she did.

The school leaders’ and author’s personal stories are captured in key and sub themes designed to highlight possible patterns revealed by the study’s research questions. These findings are a result of the extrapolation, coding, and categorization of the individual school leaders’ and researcher’s interview transcripts and their responses to the School Leader Background Questionnaire (Appendix E) and the individual interview questions (Appendix F).

Key Themes

The following key themes and sub themes emerged from data analyzed to examine the factors that influence school leaders' decision-making and leadership in the face of a school crisis.

School Leaders and Decision Making

Decision Making Framework. All three of the school leaders approached their decision-making process differently when managing their significant school crisis, however, did not identify a specific framework. Principal Character A claimed that she employed a “simple model.” After she identified the problem, considered the alternatives, implemented an alternative, debriefed with herself, and filed the pertinent documents. She also compared her decision-making ability and handling of the crisis to how she made decisions on a daily basis. Principal B harkened back to her previous training based on the importance of the key players of her crisis team, their various roles, and how they responded to the needs of students. It was important to call her team together in the morning to say, “This is what the plan is going to be for the day.” The author stated that she did not need a specific decision-making process for the initial decision to self-report because it was an “ethical call” and she knew that she was doing the right thing as the leader of the school. Beyond that decision, she worked closely with the CAS regarding the OIA appeals process. The decision-making approaches among the school leaders may appear diverse, however, they are all appeared to be grounded in a reflective or intuitive framework based on literature outlined in Chapter Two.

Strengths. Principal Character A identified her strengths as having an “abundance of caution” and putting safety first. She also felt like she knew how to do the initial evacuation, the next steps, and how to inform the various school groups. Principal Character B noted, “If you

have really strong relationships with people and your community, then they're always going to rally around you to help support you.” The author’s strength was doing what she knew was the right thing to do even though she knew that her decisions were highly controversial due to the negative impact on the student athletes, school community members, and the ripple effect on the OIA and other entities.

Challenges. One challenge that Principal Character A faced was getting someone out to her school to test whether or not the pesticide was still present. The fire department said they did not smell it and denied it even occurred. The police said, “We’re right here in between the turf company and you, and we didn’t smell anything.” Principal Character A claimed that she “really believed the pesticide was still on campus, because I was feeling the effects of it”. Also, she did not believe that she “was prepared for really understanding pesticides and how to test pesticides and make a decision about the level of a pesticide on campus and having students return to campus and teachers.” Principal Character B shared that one of her challenges was making final decisions in the heat of the moment and having to desensitize yourself. She also had to cut herself off from the emotional side to keep her composure.

The author recalls the words of another OIA principal minutes before she needed to make the decision to appeal the OIA principals’ decision, “I know this is a hard decision and you should really think about your community. Remember in the long run, who you represent.” She believed that she was challenged by her mixed feelings of fighting for her school community and being loyal to the OIA. Another challenge was the guilt that the author felt about the disqualification of her team and how it affected the football boys and school community members. Her decision may have also negatively affected other athletic programs.

Effectiveness. The three school leaders in the study believe that their decision-making was effective in dealing with their significant crisis. When asked about how she felt about the effectiveness of her decision-making, Principal Character A stated, “I think it was effective, because we were able to keep students safe and not have a recurrence.” She also added, “I think just knowing how to handle a crisis and manage school closure I understood, but I don't think I can effectively assess pesticides.” Principal Character B responded similarly regarding the effectiveness of her decision making noting:

I think so. I think we had a solid plan and because I did have to involve a lot of different people who were knowledgeable about how to handle those situations. That's their job as counselors. Then working as a team was helpful in minimizing the impact of that crisis in our school.

Like the two participants, the author believed that she handled her crisis situation effectively stating, “I was confident that I had enough information, so I followed the procedures outlined by my CAS and made the report.

School Community Influence on School Leaders' Decision Making

Students. All three of the school leaders acknowledge their students as being the primary factor that influenced their decision making during their significant crises. Principal Character A was concerned about the “safety of students” in regards to the potentially harmful effects of the odor permeating in the air. Principal Character A refused to reopen the school until it was determined that the pesticide was completely dissipated. As long as she was able to smell or feel the pesticide in her throat, she “wasn't comfortable bringing students back on campus.” The school remained closed for two weeks despite the fact that Principal Character A “was getting

pressure from the communications branch and the deputy superintendent” to resume school shortly after the pesticide was detected.

Principal Character B referred to “students first” when thinking about how she was going to communicate the news of the death of their teacher to children who were “so young.” She had concerns about her Kindergarten students not understanding the whole concept of death. Her angst was how to approach the situation and prepare the youngsters, especially those that were saying, “Oh when is she going to come back?” The parents of the Kindergarteners were invited to comfort their children when they were told what happened. Some students didn’t understand and thought their teacher went away and was coming back like she did when she was pregnant. Principal Character B rallied everybody together and encouraged the adults, “for the sake of the kids,” to hold it together and to “be strong for the kids.” Throughout the day, staff and counselors checked each classroom to comfort any distraught students. Thoughts about the school-aged and younger children of the teacher who passed away, also weighed heavy on their minds.

The author knew the decision that she made affected so many people, especially the students. The author especially reiterates the negative impact that her decision had on the student athletes. Although she knew that she had to make the decision that she did, she did not believe the students should have paid the price for errors made by adults. The author expressed that the students were paying for something that they had no control over and was not their fault. The author shared that it was hard for her to self-report because she knew the boys, especially the seniors, would not have an opportunity to play in the championship game. She was also adamant that the ineligible student’s identity be protected because the forfeiture was not the student’s fault. The author also described the ride home from the OIA appeals meeting as being extremely

difficult and she did not know what to say to the disappointed football boys who made the trip to the OIA office with her in hopes to speak to the OIA principals, however, they were not allowed to do so.

Parents and Community Members. All three schools were impacted in some way by their parents and community members in regards to their significant crisis. Principal Character A shared that parents and community members were “horrificed with the pesticide overspray, knowing that their kids were exposed,” therefore she wanted to be certain that there was no pesticide remaining. Especially since a parent contributed her child’s illness to the pesticide. Principal Character A was afraid to bring students back and possibly expose them again and refused to open the campus until she was certain that the pesticide was no longer present on campus and that a second occurrence would not happen. It was also important for Principal Character A to keep responding to parent concerns and to let them know exactly what type of pesticide was detected and the known side effects of the pesticide.

Principal Character B’s parents comforted one another, the students, and did what they could to help the school staff prepare the students’ reactions to the teacher’s untimely death. Because the news spread fast in the small community, some parents had already spoken to their children about the crisis upon returning to school. Over the next week, the school hosted a couple of gatherings, one being a dedication of one of the community gardens located on the campus because the teacher was known to spend time working in the gardens. Parents and community members also held a fundraiser out of concern for the husband and four young children of the deceased teacher. Principal Character B acknowledged the “strength of school community influence” and noted “if you have really strong relationships with people and your community, then they’re always going to rally around you to help support you.”

According to the author, the parents and the community members had an emergency meeting and a rally. Although some parents and community members wanted more specific facts about the circumstances of the ineligibility, the author was only able to share information about the appeals process. At the rally, hundreds of people lined the streets in front of the school with t-shirts and signs depicting the mantra, "Let the Boys Play." Some parents retained a lawyer and took the OIA to court. The hope was that a judge would rule to suspend the OIA decision to deny the school's appeal so that the school could participate in the playoffs. Many believed that it was important for the boys to be able to play even if the case was lost and the boys were stripped of the title if they won the championship game. The author recalls the advice of a colleague to think about her community and who she represented in the long run.

Ethical Dilemmas of School Leaders' Decision Making

The presence of one or more ethical dilemmas was noted in all three of the school leaders' stories. The DOE state personnel pressured Principal Character A to open the school and resume classes even though she could still feel the presence of pesticide in her throat when took a deep breath in certain areas of her campus. Although not everyone had the same reaction to the remnants of the pesticide, Principal Character A was concerned about those who were really sensitive to the smell of chemicals. She also got criticized by DOE state personnel for not allowing the media on campus. Her reasoning for this decision was because she "felt like if it wasn't safe for teachers and students, why would it be safe for the media?" Nevertheless, she was still pressured her to let the media on campus and to speak to them.

Principal Character B struggled with the interesting and problematic phenomena of her staff posting updates on social media sites throughout the ordeal. She also learned more about the complexity of how people processed and dealt with death. Principal Character B recalled that

“some were completely traumatized and crying. Some kind of laughed and giggled, or they made stupid jokes that were inappropriate, but it was just their way of coping.” She did not anticipate the ethical dilemma of conflict between staff members due to unexpected behaviors and responses, nor the improper use of technology in light of the crisis situation.

The author recalled an OIA member trying to talk her out of her decision to self-report her school’s ineligibility to the OIA. Another ethical dilemma was deciding whether or not to appeal the majority vote of her colleagues to uphold the forfeiture, or support her school community and appeal the decision.

Preparedness of School Leaders for Decision Making

The responses of the school leaders in regards to being prepared for their school crisis were varied. Principal Character A felt like she knew what to do and what she needed to do. “We knew how to do the initial evacuation, then we knew how to next steps and how to inform just the various school groups. On the other hand, Principal Character A did not feel prepared to meet with the media. She also believed that she was poorly advised by being asked to hold a conference in the gym and invite all of the media personnel. She did not feel prepared to answer questions such as, “Why is your cafeteria still serving lunch to the elementary school?”

Principal Character B recalled:

Oh god, I don’t think you’re ever fully prepared. I think that particular incident, I don’t think I’ve ever imagined myself being in that situation with the death of an employee, and then having to have it just so immediate and quickly. For me, I didn’t feel like I was prepared just with the information that I would have needed, so like I said, I was like Googling stuff to kind of help me at least get some kind of grasp on what I needed to do, or what I should say, what is appropriate.

Principal Character B also noted:

We used to get a lot of training before in crisis situations, and don't get that anymore, so that's kind of interesting too. We've got to kind of rely on what we have at our school level or within our district, but I don't think anybody from outside DOE.

The author was prepared for certain stages of her crisis situation. Although the self-reporting process took an emotional toll on her, she felt prepared to handle the formal procedures that this decision required. The author did not feel prepared for the rapid chain of events that occurred after she self-reported. Besides being better equipped to handle the onslaught of the media in response to the school's predicament, the author does not believe that anything could have prepared her for the reactions in response to her decision.

Training. When asked about training related to crisis management, Principal Character A shared that she has a lot of training in the DOE:

At least annually, we have training about different types of crisis situations, different types of drills, and we practice the drills. This one would have been a shelter in place. We practice that, and we learn about it. We also get information from memos about school closures and who to call and the protocol for that, so I know the rules about who can close a school and how do you get permission and things like that.

Principal Character B stated, "Nothing of this magnitude. Nothing related to this." She did not have any training to help her to be proactive and prepared for the situation. She noted:

I think you're just kind of reflecting on prior incidents in regards to you know you're going to have to respond immediately and you know you're going to have to

communicate with the various role groups what's going on and you know you've got to provide support, but as far as how to do those things specifically, no.

Principal Character B also recalled that more training to prepare for crisis situations were available in the past and now she needs to rely on school level or district supports. The author noted that she was not prepared to handle the media frenzy in response to her decision to self-report. She was also ill prepared to share information with her school community, especially since they wanted to know information that she could not divulge. The authority would have also appreciated more assistance in regards to her participation in the court proceedings.

Supports. Principal Character A acknowledged that she received help from the CAS.

Principal Character A “ran everything by her and got feedback from her. I was the one who made the decision about closing, but she had to approve it, and then let the Superintendent know.”

Principal Character B credited district level resources and the support that came from other schools. She recollected:

I had a really strong relationship with them, so coming in was just automatic. They just kind of helped to pick up the slack. There were just there, you know? Then went above and beyond, and came back the next couple of days just to check in and make sure the teachers and the students were okay.

Principal Character B attributed her counselors and Behavior Health Specialist as helping to support her decision-making, “our community, for sure, and then our relationship with our staff. I mean, that really helped us get through it where it was really it helped minimize the traumatic experience for the kids.” The author stated that her CAS provided assistance once she made her decision to self-report. She also credited the district investigator for helping to advise her during the court proceedings.

Desired Supports. Principal Character A indicated that she “would have liked to have had a team come, a crisis team, to help me assess the situation and make decisions.” A team that really understood pesticides and how to test pesticides. Rather, she had to “walk up to the upper campus, breathe, and see if my throat got scratchy.” Principal Character A also recalled that:

After we were closed for about a week and a half, then they finally did send someone down from a pesticide branch. He had an instrument that actually measured pesticides, and then he took a reading and he said that school was safe. After that, we opened school. I don't know why he couldn't have come in sooner.

Principal Character B mused that knowing that the district had a crisis team in advance would have enabled her to know who to call as soon as she needed assistance. The author would have appreciated getting direct assistance from the DOE state personnel. It would have been extremely helpful to have had prepared statements for the school community members and the media, instead of leaving it to the school leader to dodge phone calls or say, “no comment,” due to the confidentiality rights of the staff and students involved. More demonstration of support and empathy from the OIA Principals would have also been welcomed at the time of the crisis. The ostracism was palpable throughout and in the aftermath of the entire ordeal.

Reflections of School Leaders' Decision Making

Professional Implications. Principal Character A noted that her experience provided for professional growth in the area of resources, crisis management, and decision-making related to the crisis. Principal Character B's experience made her refocus professionally and gave her motivation to “move on” and pursue her own dreams and passions. The tragedy also made Principal Character B “stronger as a leader, and more aware of these things can happen at any time.” The author shared that subsequent crises after the forfeiture took a toll on her

professionally. This was also hard on her emotionally because she knew that the boys, especially the seniors, would not have a shot at playing in the championship game. She did not believe that she had enough time to adequately reflect upon her decision-making regarding the ineligibility crisis, before she was required to continue making critical decisions in response to subsequent crisis events that affected the school community.” The string of crises after the football team’s forfeiture, especially the unexpected student deaths, shook the author’s confidence level and made her begin to question her decision-making skills and her ability to lead effectively.

Personal Implications. Principal Character A reflected upon the long-term effects on her health due to her exposure to the pesticide. She noted, “I am still really sensitive to pesticides now. It's almost like it burned the hairs in my throat.” Principal Character B shared that the crisis was hard for her emotionally. She reflected that as a leader “you have to be strong for everybody else, and you're just trying to hold it together.” The author was greatly impacted personally because it was hard for her to separate her professional role from her personal life.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The monumental trials and measured triumphs of this study's participants provide a portal to the multi-faceted issue of leaders as decision makers in time of crisis. This chapter offers seminal discussions, potential implications, and proposals for continued conversations and possible next steps in the examination of influential factors related to school leaders' decision-making in a crisis situation.

Discussion

This section outlines the themes common to the three school leaders' experiences and further bring their stories to light and life through the literature in Chapter Two, as well as ancillary research. Talking points frame and help to synthesis critical dialogue related to the study's overarching research question of: What factors influence a school leader's decision-making in the face of a school crisis? The rapport generated by the talking points also presents the opportunity for the author to answer an internal question that helped to drive the efforts of this chapter, "Why should anyone else care about this topic?"

Intuition is key to efficient and efficacious decision-making of school leaders. The findings in Chapter Four reflect that all three participants implemented an introspective or intuitive approach to their decision-making at the time of their school crisis. Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) contend that "intuitive and natural judgements and perceptions of others are more accurate than one would expect" (p. 257). Wilson and Schooler (1991) concur and contend that people can get distracted and their judgment can be limited when given too much time and too many alternatives to consider. All three school leaders believe that their decision-making was effective in dealing with their significant crisis. Once the school leaders gathered the facts and

assessed their needs, they implemented a steady approach to address their crisis. This innate automaticity was second-nature and seminal to decision-making and required a level of confidence often times reserved for an experienced school leader. Principal Character A believed that her decision-making skills during her crisis were no different from her day-to-day decision-making. Principal B used her context from previous training to self-assuredly outline the plan for the day for her crisis team. The author felt ethically compelled to report her own school and never considered any other alternative.

Johnson and Kruse's (2009) assertion that decision-making is at the heart of leadership, captures the essence of all three participants' heightened accountability and duty to serve. This talking point serves to answer the supporting research question: What significance does a decision-making framework or process have on a school leader's ability to make decisions in a crisis situation? The conversation in this section highlights the school leaders' trust in their intuition and confidence in their ability to overlay and apply standard decision-making skills to their own leadership expectations.

School community members' impact school leaders' decision making. The involvement of school community members during a school crisis impacted all participants' decision-making in various ways. I believe that student well-being was the primary factor for all stakeholders, as well as this being central to the decision-making efforts of all three school leaders in the time of crisis. Principal Character A's community members' "horrificed" reaction to the pesticide overspray impacted her decision-making. Her foremost concern was the safety of students and she refused to resume school until she was 100% sure that the pesticide had dissipated and she could no longer smell or feel the pesticide in her throat. Principal Character A also sent out information on side effects in response to parent health and safety concerns.

Principal Character B asked her staff to be strong “for the sake of the kids” even though they were grieving the loss of a friend and colleague. She also acknowledged her school community’s influence and strong relationships as a strength during her school crisis. The author was vehemently adamant about protecting the ineligible student’s identity because he was truly a victim this situation. She will always remember the advice of another OIA principal that helped to tip the scale for her in favor of appealing the OIA’s decision to forfeit her football team’s games. It also resonates with Liou’s (2015) sentiment that school crises impact “all school community members, extending, at times even beyond students, employees, and their families to others who have a special interest in the school’s welfare; it affects not only the school community but also the overall community and society” (p. 250).

The reiteration of the school leaders’ specific accounts for this talking point solidifies and provides evidence for the supporting research question: What impact or influence do school community members have on a school leader's decision-making in a crisis situation? This section also gives the author cause to reflect on the significance of her decision-making on micro and macro levels in light of unique beliefs, cultural underpinnings, varying perspectives, and the unspeakable grief of school level stakeholders and an entire community.

The dynamics of social media and relationships can be sources of ethical dilemmas.

Ethical dilemmas arose for all three school leaders when dealing with their crisis. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) suggests that the many contradictions in our society are the cause of the stresses and tension that we experience. They also express that when these paradoxes surface, ‘through the discussion of real-life dilemmas, we hope that they will not only lead to stimulating conversations, but also that they will encourage reflection and guidance for wise decision making in the future’ (p. 29). This study provide these “real-life dilemmas” through the candid situations

that school leaders ethically struggled with when making decisions related to their crises and how they proceeded to address these circumstances. Principal Character A was pressured by DOE state personnel to resume normal school business even though she could still detect the presence of pesticide on the campus and did not feel that her school community members would be safe. They also criticized her for not allowing the media on campus even after she expressed her concern for their safety as well. When Principal Character A's efforts to get someone to come to her school were unsuccessful, she thought about calling the Governor or a Legislator for assistance. She decided not to do this for fear of getting into trouble.

In Chapter Two, DOE Complex Area Superintendent, Hiyashida (2016), pointedly shares her perspective on the misuse of social media of parents to resolve conflict with schools. Principal Character B's ethical dilemma involved her staff posting updates on social media sites throughout her school's crisis situation. Although Principal Character B did not anticipate this improper use of technology by her staff. Such actions are becoming more common in school settings and mirror other people's behaviors. Such behaviors are characterized by Hiyashida's (2016) description of schools having to deal with situations that are spread on the internet before schools have an opportunity to deal with the situation and share their findings with those directly involved. Hiyashida (2016) contends, "One side of an incident or someone's interpretation of it, is shared over and over again on Facebook or Instagram, and what is shared is often incomplete and or misleading" (p. 44).

The author's story is laden with ethical dilemmas throughout the course of her crisis. The disquieting attempt of an OIA member trying to convince her not self-report her school's ineligibility intensified the subsequent ethical dilemmas of her crisis. The author deciding to appeal the majority vote of her colleagues to uphold the forfeiture further compromised and

questioned her loyalty to the OIA. The discussion for this talking point suitably provides answers to the supporting research question: What ethical dilemmas do school leaders face in a crisis situation? It also opens the door for conversations pertaining to the growing dilemma of social media used by students, as evidenced by the author's vignette in Chapter One about her student who attempted to kill himself and continued to have suicidal ideations due to being cyberbullied. In addition to the emotional trauma that the inappropriate use of social media can cause, some of these cases can monopolize resources taking several hours and even days to investigate. Moreover, in the author's experience, parents on both sides of the issue are often unsatisfied with the outcome of the investigation for various reasons. These reasons include the disciplinary consequences for student involvement in the incident and the news of their child's level of involvement in the inappropriate use of social media. Unfortunately, many incidents involving the questionable use of social media has the potential of being a school crisis as popular culture takes hold of individual's common sense, societal ethos, and better judgement.

The level of school leader preparedness for crises situations vary. How prepared are Hawai'i public school leaders to make decisions in crisis situations? The response to this supporting question is complex. Allender (2006) contends that "A crisis opens up the fault lines of shame and blame. Who's at fault? Who failed to anticipate the problem? Who failed to handle the initial stages of the crisis well?" (p. 64). Placing blame is not the purpose of this talking point. Rather, it serves to promote an opportunity for critical dialogue to frame future next steps in providing school leaders with the supports that they desire and require in regards to responding to school crises. The school leaders in this study had mixed feelings about how prepared they were for their unique crisis. Principal Character A felt like she knew how to handle the initial stages of her crisis. She worked closely with her CAS to make the determination to

close school, however, did not feel prepared to deal with the media and believed that she was poorly advised by DOE state personnel to hold a press conference related to the pesticide incident. Principal Character A did not feel equipped to answer probing questions from the media when she was trying to get important answers herself. The assistance of a crisis team that understood pesticides and how to test its presence, would have helped Principal Character A to effectively assess her situation and make more timely decisions. The absence of this resource resulted in Principal Character A risking her own health to determine if the toxic chemicals still present on her campus. She felt that her limited knowledge hampered her decision-making and only resumed school after someone finally measured the presence of pesticides in the air and deemed her campus safe. Principal Character A also participated in a lot of annual training for different types of crisis situations and drills as a school leader .and receives information from memos regarding protocols and contacts for future school closures.

Principal Character B felt compelled to “desensitize” and cut herself off from her emotional side to keep her composure when making final decisions in the heat of the moment. She expressed, “I don't think you're ever fully prepared” and never imagined having to deal with the death of an employee. Principal Character B relied on the internet to get information regarding what she needed to do and what was appropriate to say in light of her crisis situation. She credits her team for having a solid plan, being knowledgeable, and for working together to minimize the impact of her crisis. Principal Character B also acknowledged having district level resources and support from other schools. She noted that she did not have any training to help her to be proactive and prepared for the situation and had to reflect on previous incidents in order to respond to her crisis and effectively communicate her decision-making required to manage her crisis situation. Principal Character B also expressed that if she knew that the district had a crisis

team in advance, this would have enabled her call for assistance as soon as she needed it. She spoke to her CAS about the need for awareness of available resources and protocols to access these resources at the district level because crises are inevitable. Principal Character B recalled that there has been more training opportunities to prepare for crisis situations the past. She was unaware of any support provided from anyone outside of the DOE.

There was no way to prepare for the rapid chain of events that occurred after the author self-reported an ineligible football player to the OIA. She could never have imagined the community rally, the OIA sanction, the appeal, the denial of the appeal, the football field assembly, the lawsuit, and everything in between and beyond. There was no conceivable way that the author could have prepared for the ride back to school from the OIA office with the crestfallen students, nor having to share the disappointing news about the OIA's decision at an assembly. This author wished she had been more prepared and would have appreciated having a written statement in advance and one to release to the press. She could feel the eyes of over a thousand people on her while she walked to the microphone and as she strung together words that did not sound like her own.

Cornell and Sheras (1998) claim that the unexpected nature of a crisis make it difficult for any plan to prepare for and anticipate unique challenges of each situation. This talking point stresses the daunting challenges shared by the school leaders related to being prepared for their unique crisis experiences and speaks to the complexity of their individual issues and the far-reaching implications of their decisions.

The emotional work of school leaders affects decision making. The overall well-being of school leaders help to ensure the effectiveness of their decision-making skills. This talking point helps to address the supporting question: What are the immediate and long-term

professional and personal implications for school leaders in the aftermath of school crisis? This question allows the study participants to reflect on how their unique experiences transformed or affected them in their role as a school leader and on a personal level. Principal Character A expressed the opportunity for professional growth in the areas of resources, crisis management, and decision-making. She also shared her concerns about long-term effects on her health due to her exposure to the toxic pesticide that she was in contact with for two weeks. Principal Character B's experience made her a stronger leader and motivated her to pursue dreams and continue her leadership at another school. She also noted that the crisis really affected emotionally, but knew that as a leader she needed to be strong for everybody else. Fein and Isaacson (2009) describes this phenomenon as "emotional work in light of school crisis leadership is based on a sociological concept that focuses on the interplay between what a person feels and what he or she thinks is appropriate to feel in a certain situation" (p. 1329). The author expressed that her crisis took a toll on her professionally and she did not have adequate time to reflect due to subsequent crises. Her experiences also made her start questioning her confidence in her decision-making abilities and her leadership identity.

Johnson and Kruse (2009) express that "the personal needs, bias, and presuppositions that leaders bring to decisions are part and parcel of the human condition. Together they inform the scientific and artistic approaches individuals exercise in the decision-making process" (p. 15). Many people are affected if a school leader is not capable of professionally and personally dealing with a school crisis. Therefore, it is critical to assist school leaders to excel in their craft in light of school crises. A craft that beholds an awesome level of responsibility, accountability, and influence. A craft that holds the power to change the course of the present and the future

with one decision. A craft that over many years and family generations will be defined by a school leaders' decisions.

Implications and Recommendations

The talking points and discussions in this section address the study's overarching and supporting questions and provide clarity and connections to the findings and literature related to the study's topic. The critical conversations also provide a spring board for further implications and suggestions related to study.

School leaders need more training and resources for crisis management. As outlined in the Discussions section, the findings of this study indicate that more training and resources are needed for school leaders in the area of crisis management. For the purpose of clarity and consistency, crisis management in this section encompass the components of preparedness, response, and recovery. A plethora of crisis management resources already exist in the Hawai'i DOE school system. It is the author's recommendation that the state select pertinent crisis management documents to include in the state's opening of school year booklet that is disseminated to all schools as a resource for schools' mandatory compliance meeting at the beginning of each the school year. Including memos and policies related to crisis management to this booklet would help to ensure that the information is disseminated to all employees annually.

The second recommendation is for the Hawai'i DOE state personnel to create an annual training schedule for school crisis teams to attend; similar to the required training that is held for all security attendants. The sessions should be based on common and concerning crisis situations occurring in our state and nation. An annual safety survey would be instrumental in providing Hawai'i DOE state and district personnel data that can be used to determine and plan universal and customized crisis management trainings and resources depending on the schools' feedback.

Schools could also be surveyed to determine the type of resources individual schools may need in the area of crisis management. Trainings and resources could be disseminated via face-to-face sessions, webinars, videos, online courses, etc.

The third recommendation is for Hawai'i DOE state personnel to help schools assess their crisis situation and determine what type and level of supports are needed as soon as the crisis occurs. This practice may require the convening a customized crisis team of experts to be deployed to the school to help staff, to help coordinate and serve as a liaison for multi agencies and first responders, or contacting the DOE communications office to assist with drafting communication to families and the media. Whether a school requires a state support team to be deployed to a school campus to assist or not, a team should be automatically assigned to the school to meet and debrief the procedures and decisions that were made by the school's crisis team during the crisis. This meeting is critical to determine the need for any follow up actions since the repercussion of some crises can linger for weeks and even months after the actual event.

State support teams should also be available to respond at any time of the day or night. Especially if first responders are called to the scene so there is someone of authority that can help to facilitate multi agency efforts while the school leader and crisis team is busy managing the crisis. The author realizes that the distance between the state offices and some schools may be problematic, however, the rural schools are already accustomed to this and having a state team arrive one hour or so after the initial call is better than not having the assistance at all. In the case of two fires on the author's campus in May of 2017, the fire inspector took a little over two hours to get to the school from the time of the 911 call on both occasions. A DOE state team member would have probably been able to get to the school campus in time to greet the fire inspector,

assist where needed, and increase the visibility of DOE state personnel and show support of school leaders and crisis team. Especially since both incidents were determined to be the work of arsonists. There has been no follow up from DOE state personnel regarding these incidents to date.

The fourth recommendation is for schools to receive feedback on their school's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that are required to be submitted annually. Currently, these EAPs are collected, however the author has never gotten written feedback in regards to her EAP and she is unsure of the criteria used to review these plans. The formal review of schools' EAPs with documented recommendations and commendations would serve to give schools valuable feedback regarding the comprehensiveness and viability of their plans. The School/Office-Specific Emergency Plan Evaluation Form (Appendix G) is an example of a tool that can be used to set criteria or guide schools in writing clear and detailed EAPs. The form also includes elements pertaining to the roles and functions of a school's crisis team.

The fifth recommendation is for the DOE state level to formalize a system to collect information from schools regarding the date and circumstances of all school crises occurring on and school campuses. Compiling accurate information is critical for the purpose of assessing the true needs of schools in the area of crisis management. Once the information is available, a quarterly brief highlighting crises events in Hawai'i DOE schools should be disseminated to all schools for the following reasons: 1) to keep school leaders abreast with crisis events that their colleagues are dealing with; 2) to provide tips, resources, and training information related to crises that schools can use to help build their capacity and knowledge base in preparation for managing similar crises; 3) to assist in revising schools' EAPs; 4) to provide a resource to school community members to build their awareness, and; 5) to start creating positive working relationships and collaboration between school leaders and DOE state personnel.

Currently the author's CAS asks his complex area school leaders who have experienced crisis events to share their stories at monthly meetings. These riveting accounts generate rich discussion centered on the individual school leader's crisis and information that pertaining to student safety, media reports, school community member involvement, ethical dilemmas, state and district assistance, etc.

The author realizes that these recommendations require compliance and monitoring. School leaders that have not experienced a crisis serious enough to ensure that fundamental components for crisis management are in place in their school may need a mandate to make the topic of crisis management a priority.

The recommendations in this section are starting points for critical conversations that all school leaders should to be engaged in to build their awareness, confidence, and skill level in the area of decision-making and leading through a significant school crisis. Surviving a crisis should not be a school leaders' ultimate goal when one occurs. Having the necessary knowledge, resources, and assistance to thrive through a crisis should be a critical part of a school leader's professional craft in ensuring a safe educational setting conducive to learning for all school community members.

These resources will serve to promote school community and stakeholders' awareness for critical protocols related to school crises to help ensure student safety and well-being during and after a crisis event. Furthermore, the author recommends that Hawai'i DOE leadership expand their scope of efforts in the area of policy development and standard procedures to support school leaders' in effectively and expeditiously managing school crises.

The misinformation and speculation generated by social media and media sources need to be addressed. The author would have greatly appreciated assistance from DOE state

communications office by way of prepared statements and press releases for her initial decision to self-report in response to subsequent events generated by this decision. This may have helped her to keep the ripple effect of her decision to respectable swells instead of a formidable tidal wave. Instead, the author was left on her own and provided the standard, “no comment” statement, which seems to be “the comment” that gives some media outlets and reporters license to report whatever they want without having to verify their speculations and untruths. It is important to note that the author has gotten immediate assistance from the DOE state personnel through her CAS to assist with the drafting of parent letters and other announcements for recent crisis situations. This has been extremely helpful and confidence boosting. It is also a resource that can be refined and formalized so all school leaders are aware of the protocols for accessing this valuable resource.

The author also shared her disenchantment with the media sources that reported inaccurate information about the eligibility status of the football player that the entire crisis was hinged on. Equally concerning was the fact that the author’s own school personnel were quoted as sharing incorrect information. Although the author has been told in the past that she is the only person authorized to represent her school, nothing has been furnished in writing to support this assertion. Written policies or guidelines would afford school leaders the authority to prohibit staff participation in media requests and allow staff to give interviews on a case-by-case basis without being concerned about violating anyone’s constitutional rights. In addition, once guidelines are in place, DOE state personnel should have a system in place to search mainstream media sources for non-compliance of the policy and report these to the CAS for follow up. Policies in this area would help to promote more responsible and accurate information sharing,

prevent potential confidentiality and personnel violations, and decrease schools' vulnerability to negative and unfounded press.

Principal Character B and the author experienced incidents that involved employees using social media during a crisis. This concern has also been shared by other school leaders in meetings that the author has attended. Thus, having clear guidelines for employee use of social media during a crisis situation is long overdue. This problem requires its own policy specific to crisis events and other circumstances that may require employees to refrain from posting updates or photos via social media in the midst of a school crisis. The potential backlash of these employee actions include crisis plans being compromised or thwarted. The threat to people's safety is very real in regards to this implication. To this point, it is recommended that this guideline be exclusive to the inappropriate use of social media during crisis situations and not a revision or part and parcel of current Hawai'i DOE technology policies. Similar to the suggested policy related to the media, this policy will also need to address the First Amendment rights of individuals.

Hawai'i DOE school's working relationship with other agencies such as the Department of Health straddles the media and social media issue outlined in this section. The Hepatitis A crisis experienced by a few schools is a prime example of multi-agencies needed to coordinate and respond as expeditiously and carefully as possible. It is understandable that all agencies want schools to release accurate information, however, it is the school leader who is left to take the blame and criticism when stakeholders and the community do not agree with the timing of the communication or the way in which the news is shared. Continued conversations and clearly documented protocols about expected timeframes and press releases in health related crises as well as other school crises, would help greatly help to ease the vulnerability, condemnation, and

conceivable litigious actions from school community members and the general public that school leaders often need to withstand.

In conclusion, the discussion, implications, and recommendations of this study stem from the author's perception and interpretation of other school leaders' personal accounts through the lens of a researcher. When considering the study's recommendations, it is important to note that Hawai'i DOE schools are a part of one educational system; individual schools are geographically assigned to a complex, a complex area, and a district lead by a CAS. School leaders have great autonomy in terms of the development and implementation of policies and practices for all educational issues, including school crises. Barring mandated policies from the DOE state level, this study's recommendations related to crisis readiness and social media guidelines may already be in place for other Hawai'i DOE schools. Thus, unearthing the glaring need for the state to truly behave as one system and standardize its expectations, practices, and accountability measures for all schools to comply with current and future policies and procedures related to school crises.

Meanwhile, complacency and waiting for state or district directives regarding proactive measures for crisis situations is not suggested. School leaders who have had the unfortunate background of experiencing school crises have the responsibility and obligation to be better prepared for the next one and the one after that one. School leaders who have not, can learn from their colleagues' accounts of crisis triage and reap the benefits of vicarious learning.

The author's positionality related to this study is also important to reiterate and take into consideration in terms of the study's limitations and significance of its findings. This positionality risks violating a school community's privacy and inviolable history, raising questions of integrity and selfless personal gain. The experiences of the author may also be too

recent for her to provide objective professional recommendations on a topic that is still raw and personal on many levels.

This study fulfills its purpose of using narrative inquiry to examine the factors that influence school leaders' decision making in the midst and aftermath of a significant school crisis. It also contributes to educational practitioners' knowledge base and theories about the social, cultural, and psychological significances of school leadership relative to making decisions in response to a crisis that affect an entire learning organization and community.

Epilogue: A Story That Deserves To Be Told

Leadership is not about problems and decisions; it is a profoundly relational enterprise that seeks to motivate people toward a vision that will require significant change and risk on everybody's part. Decisions are simply the doors that leaders, as well as followers, walk through to get to the land where redemption can be found.

-Allender, 2006, p. 14

It is the author's hope that revelations of this study promote deep self-reflection of school leaders guided by the inferences of two key questions: What anchors my decision making as a school leader? And what would my black box say about my decision-making in the face of a school crisis? School leaders' authentic attention to these queries are crucial given the fact that their decisions can be instrumental in changing the course of peoples' lives and can affect relationships with families across generations. Especially in the aftermath of student initiated crises that often times linger on as a result of the charged emotions and high stakes consequences involved in the decision-making for these events. The author is also intrigued by the participants' choice of their distinctive school crisis to share for the study, given more high profile school crises that they are known to have experienced as school leaders. Thus, generating the following questions: What makes one school crisis more story worthy than another? And is the significance of a crisis truly in the eye of the school leader responsible for leading through it?

Sigh with me as I end my story. A story of a student who trusted in educators to teach from their hearts, nourish her spirit, and plant the perennial seed of hope. A story of a young educator who was awestruck by a school community's tragic story and their resilience and resolve to thrive despite their crisis. A story of the heartbreak, spirit, and hope of experienced school leaders that illuminates their courage and authenticity while making critical decisions during and after their school crises. A story of school communities who were able to persevere through obstacles, endure great loss, and overcome enormous adversity. A story of self-reflective, soulful work, and personal experiences of school leaders that share the promise and potential for other school leaders to thrive while making life-shaping decisions and leading their schools in the throes and aftermath of a significant school crisis. A story that deserves to be told.

References

- Allender, D. B., (2006). *Leading with a limp*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press.
- Ambady, N. & Rosenthal, R. (1992). Thin slices of expressive behavior as predictors of interpersonal consequences: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 111(2), 256-274.
- Aquilar, E. (2008). Another school hit with case of tb. *Honolulu Advertiser*. Retrieved from <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2008/Feb/06/ln/hawaii802060405.html>
- Arevalo, E. (2016). Hepatitis A confirmed in elementary school cafeteria worker. *KHON2*. Retrieved from <http://khon2.com/2016/08/23/hepatitis-a-confirmed-in-elementary-school-cafeteria-worker/>
- Baer, B. (n.d.). Kahuku disqualified from football playoffs. *Hawaii News Now*. Retrieved from <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/13454856/kahuku-football-team-loses-appeal>
- Behar, R. (2003). *Translated women: Crossing the border with esperanza's story*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Brannon, J. and Blakeman, K. (2005). Radford student expelled. *Honolulu Advertiser*. Retrieved from <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2005/Feb/02/ln/ln10p.html>
- Catastrophe (Drama). (2017). In Wikipedia. Retrieved on June 3, 2017 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catastrophe_\(drama\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catastrophe_(drama))
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as a method*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. New York, New York: Routledge.
- Columbine High School Shootings (2009). *History*. Retrieved on June 11, 2017 from <http://www.history.com/topics/columbine-high-school-shootings>
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2011). An exploration of the effects of victim visuals on perceptions and reactions to crisis events. *Public Relations Review*, 37(2), 115-120.
- Cornell, D. G., & Sheras, P. L. (1998). Common errors in school crisis response: Learning from our mistakes. *Psychology in the Schools*, 35(3), 297-307.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks: CA, Sage Publications
- David, M. (n.d). Kalani high school stabbing allegedly over a girl. *Hawaii News Now*. Retrieved from <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/12505614/kalani-high-school-stabbing-allegedly-over-a-girl>

- Epitasis. (2015). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on June 3, 2017 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epitasis>
- Ethical dilemma. (2017). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on June 11, 2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical_dilemma
- Fein, A. H., & Isaacson, N. S. (2009). Echoes of Columbine The Emotion Work of Leaders in School Shooting Sites. *American behavioral scientist*, 52(9), 1327-1346.
- From KHON2's archives: 20 killed in molokai plane crash. (2016, November 29). Retrieved from: <http://khon2.com/2016/11/29/from-khon2s-archives-20-killed-in-molokai-plane-crash/>
- Gladwell, M. (2007). *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking*. New York, NY: Back Bay Books.
- Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Goldstein, B. E. (2011). *Collaborative resilience: Moving through crisis to opportunity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gutierrez, B. (2015). Police presence high day after big brawl. Retrieved from <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/30565138/four-arrested-after-big-brawl-near-kapolei-high>
- Hiyashida, L. (2016, March 27). Using social media to complain about educators not good way to resolve conflict. *Honolulu Star Advertiser*. p. 44.
- Honda, P. (2010). Kahuku's postseason in limbo? *Hawaii Prep World*. Retrieved from <http://www.hawaiiprepworld.com/football/kahukus-postseason-in-limbo/>
- Ioane, M. (1976). Hawai'i '78 [Recorded by artist: Israel Kamakawiwo'ole]. On Facing future [Album]. Kailua: Mountain Apple Company.
- Jin, Y., Liu, B. F., & Austin, L. L. (2014). Examining the role of social media in effective crisis management: The effects of crisis origin, information form, and source on publics' crisis responses. *Communication research*, 41(1), 74-94.
- Johnson, B. & Kruse, S. (2009) Decision Making for Educational Leaders: Underexamined dimensions and issues. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kamakawiwo'ole, I. (1993). Hawaii '78. *Facing Future* [CD]. Honolulu, HI: Mountain Apple Company.

- Kobayashi, K. (2010, November 9). OIA stands by kahuku forfeitures. *Star Advertiser*. Retrieved from <http://www.staradvertiser.com/2010/11/09/hawaii-news/oia-stands-by-kahuku-forfeitures/>
- Lent, P., Rose, M., Stuart-Hunt, R., Edstrom, L., Rothschild, C. R., Weisman, A., Delacorte, K., Vascellaro, S., & Abell, K. (2003). *Teaching through a crisis: September 11 and beyond*. New York, NY: Bank Street College of Education.
- Liou, Y., (2015). Management: A model of dynamic responsiveness to crisis life cycle. *Educational Administration Quarterly School Crisis*, 51 (2), 247-289. doi: 10.1177/0013161X14532467
- Lum, S. (n.d.). Kahuku high and intermediate reopen. *Hawaii News Now*. Retrieved from <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/6495389/kahuku-high-and-intermediate-reopen>
- Mears, C. L. (2012). *Reclaiming school in the aftermath of trauma*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan
- Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moreno, L. (2006) *Hawai'i students, educators say violence not a major problem*. Retrieved from <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2006/Oct/11/lh/FP610110349.html>
- Muncey, T. (2010) *Creating autoethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Nathan, M. L., & Kovoov-Misra, S. (2002). No pain, yet gain: Vicarious organizational learning from crises in an inter-organizational field. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 38(2), 245-266.
- Patton, M. Q., (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods 3rd Edition*, Thousand Oaks: CA, Sage Publications
- Powley, E. H. (2009). Reclaiming resilience and safety: Resilience activation in the critical period of crisis. *Human Relations*, 62(9), 1289-1326.
- Protasis. (2013). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protasis>
- Randle, B. (2013, May 2). Community on edge after explosive device found at Kahuku Park. Retrieved from: <http://khon2.com/2013/05/02/community-on-edge-after-explosive-device-found-at-kahuku-park/>
- Ray, R. (n.d.). The five act play (dramatic structure). *Storyboard That*. Retrieved from <http://www.storyboardthat.com/articles/e/five-act-structure>

- Roshan, M., Warren, M., & Carr, R. (2016). Understanding the use of social media by organisations for crisis communication. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63, 350-361.
- Saaty, Thomas L. (1995) Decision making for leaders: The analytic hierarchy process for decisions in a complex world. Pittsburg, PA: RWS Publications.
- Shapiro and Stefkovich. (2016). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Social media. (2017). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on June 13, 2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media
- State of Hawaii/Oahu Interscholastic Association Bylaws. (2014).
- State of Hawaii/Oahu Interscholastic Association Handbook. (2014).
- State of Hawaii/Office of School Facilities and Support Services. (n.d.). *Bomb threat checklist*. OSFSS Form 1100a.
- State of Hawaii/Office of Strategy, Innovation, and Performance Accountability Section. (2008, Nov. 21). *School status and improvement report - School year 2007-2008: Principal Character A School*. Retrieved from Accountability Resource Center Hawaii (ARCH) <http://arch.k12.hi.us/PDFs/ssir/2008/Windward/SSIR307-4.pdf>
- State of Hawaii/Office of Strategy, Innovation, and Performance Accountability Section. (2011, Dec. 2). *School status and improvement report - School year 2010-2011: Authors School*. Retrieved from Accountability Resource Center Hawaii (ARCH) <http://arch.k12.hi.us/PDFs/ssir/2011/Windward/SSIR307-4.pdf>
- State of Hawaii/Office of Strategy, Innovation, and Performance Accountability Section. (2016, June 30). *School status and improvement report - School year 2014-2015: Principal Character B School*. Retrieved from Accountability Resource Center Hawaii (ARCH) Retrieved from <http://arch.k12.hi.us/PDFs/ssir/2015/Windward/325SSIR-4.pdf>
- The Story of Kaipahua Kura. (2011). *Kahuku Nation*. Retrieved on June 3, 2017 from <https://redraidernation.wordpress.com/2011/09/15/the-story-of-kaipahua-kura-kahukus-very-own-haka/>
- U.S. Department of Education/Emergency Response and Crisis Management Center Technical Assistance Center (ERCM TAC). (2000). A coordinated response to multiple deaths in a school community help the healing begin. Lessons Learned from School Crisis and Emergencies, 1(2), 1-8. Retrieved from https://rems.ed.gov/docs/CoordinatedResponseToMultipleDeaths_1102.pdf

- Wiley, J. and Sons. (1998). Common errors in school crisis response: learning from our mistakes. *Psychology in the Schools*, 35(3), 297-307.
- Williams, P. (1970). We've Only Just Begun [Recorded by artist: The Carpenters]. Close to You [Album]. Santa Monica: A & M Records.
- Wilson, T. D., & Schooler, J. W. (1991). Thinking too much: introspection can reduce the quality of preferences and decisions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 60(2), 181.
- Wright, Donald K., and Michelle D. Hinson. "An analysis of the increasing impact of social and other new media on public relations practice." *12th annual International Public Relations Research Conference, Miami, Florida*. 2009.
- Zero Tolerance Policy, HI Rev Stat § 302A-1134.6. (2016). Retrieved from <http://law.justia.com/codes/hawaii/2010/division1/title18/chapter302a/302a-1134-6>

Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Letter in Response to a School Crisis

January 13, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The Aloha School administration was made aware of potential alternations between students on our campus today, stemming from an off-campus altercation that occurred after school on Thursday, January 12, 2017.

In preparation for school today and to ensure the safety of all our students, the Aloha School administration:

- Immediately informed HPD and requested police assistance and presence.
- Informed our community leaders and requested their support and presence.
- Held an emergency meeting with the Aloha School crisis team, and informed our school faculty and staff of the potential threats to student safety.
- Received additional support and presence from other Complex school administrators.

The school day, as well as after school went without incident. As an additional safety measure, our school dance scheduled for tonight was postponed to a later date.

Your child's safety is our utmost priority. Please know we constantly review and revise our school's emergency procedures and safety plans.

In case of emergency, we will notify you immediately through our mass messaging phone system, our school Facebook page, and our school website. As such, it is important that we have your most current contact information—which can be updated at our administration office during business hours.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support to ensure Aloha School is a safe and positive learning environment for all.

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



THE UNIVERSITY OF

of HAWAII

MANOA

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

April 13, 2016

TO: Donna Lindsey
Jeffrey Moniz, Ph.D.
Principal Investigators
Education

FROM: Denise A. Lin-DeShetler, MPH, MA
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise A. Lin-DeShetler".

SUBJECT: CHS #23873 - "Heartbreak, Spirit, and Hope: Leading a School in the Thrones and Aftermath of School Crises"⁵¹

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On April 13, 2016, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) (Categories 2,4).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A^elmonthtml>

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road
Biomedical Sciences Building B104
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007
Fax: (808) 956-8683
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

I would like to invite you to participate in research study as a part of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) Professional Educational Practice program.

The purpose of the study is to examine and analyze school leaders’ decision-making in response to a significant school crises through their personal experiences and stories. For this study, a significant school crisis is defined as any event that involved a student or staff member, disrupted normal school business, was prolonged, and went public via the media. A school leader is defined as a principal of the school at the time of the significant school crisis.

Activities and Time Commitment: This study will include a questionnaire and individual interviews with school leaders at an agreed upon location and time. The individual interviews will consist of 15 to 20 open-ended questions and may take up to an hour and a half. The interview will be audio-recorded then transcribed. The questionnaire will consist of ten questions and will be sent to you to be completed prior to the interview. The questionnaire and interview data will be analyzed as part of the study.

Benefits and Risks: The results of this study may help to inform professional practices of leaders in the education field. I believe there are no risks to you for participating in this study. Please note that you can stop the interview or withdraw from this study at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality: All data will be stored in a safe place. The only people authorized to have access to the research information will be myself, my University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa advisers, and members of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Human Studies Program.

At the conclusion of the study, all data will be destroyed. When reporting the results of the research study, I will not use your name or any other personal identifying information that can identify you. I will use pseudonyms and report the findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time, with no penalty or loss to you. Your choice to participate or not participate will not affect your rights to services at University of Hawai‘i.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please call me at 256-8508 or email me at drpl@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my adviser, Dr. Jeffrey Moniz at jmoniz@hawaii.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808-956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu.

It is my hope that the findings of this study will help to inform professional practices of school leaders in the area of leadership and decision-making in response to significant school crises.

Mahalo,
Donna Lindsey, Ed.D Candidate

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in a Doctoral Research Study and

Consent Form for Interviews

My name is Donna Lindsey. I am a researcher conducting this study as a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) Professional Educational Practice program. I am conducting this research study as a requirement for earning my graduate degree. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze school leaders' decision-making and leadership in response to significant school crises through their personal stories. For this study, a significant school crisis is defined as any event that involved a student or staff member and disrupted normal school business, was prolonged, and went public via the media. A school leader is defined as a principal of the school.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you participate in this research study, it will include a questionnaire and individual interviews with a small group of school leaders at an agreed upon location and time. The interview will consist of 15 to 20 open-ended questions and may take an hour. The interview will be audio-recorded then transcribed and analyzed. The questionnaire will consist of five questions and will be sent to you to be completed prior to the interview. The questionnaire answers will also be analyzed as part of the study.

Benefits and Risks: The results of this study may help to inform professional practices of school leaders. I believe there is little risk to you in participating in this research study. Please note that you can also stop the interview or withdraw from this study at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality: All data will be stored in a safe place. The only people authorized to have access to the research information will be myself, my University of Hawai'i at Mānoa advisers, and members of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Human Studies Program.

At the conclusion of the study, all data will be destroyed. When reporting the results of the research study, I will not use your name or any other personal identifying information that can identify you. I will use pseudonyms and report the findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study there will be no penalty or loss to you. Your choice to participate or not participate will not affect your rights to services at University of Hawai'i.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please call me at 256-8508 or email me at drpl@hawaii.edu.

You may also contact my adviser, Dr. Jeffrey Moniz at jmoniz@hawaii.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808-956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date the signature page. Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated. It is the hope of the researcher that the study's findings will provide valuable information for school leaders in the area of leadership and decision-making in response to a significant school crises.

Signature for Consent:

I am agreeing to participate in the research study entitled, *Heartbreak, Spirit, and Hope: Leading a School in the Throes and Aftermath of a School Crisis*.

Please initial next to either "Yes" or "No" to the following:

_____ Yes _____ No **I consent to be audio-recorded for the interview or focus group portion of this research.**

Name of Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

School Leader Background Questionnaire

Name: _____

1. Teaching Experience: ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 20-25 years
(check one) ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 25 or more years

Level(s): ☐ Elementary ☐ Intermediate ☐ High School
(check all that apply)

Type(s): ☐ Public ☐ Independent ☐ Charter
(check all that apply)

2. Vice-Principal Experience: ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 20-25 years
(check one) ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 25 or more years

Level(s): ☐ Elementary ☐ Intermediate ☐ High School
(check all that apply)

Type(s): ☐ Public ☐ Independent ☐ Charter
(check all that apply)

3. State/District Experience: ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 20-25 years
(check one) ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 25 or more years

Principal: ☐ 0-5 years ☐ 10-15 years ☐ 20-25 years
(check one) ☐ 5-10 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 25 or more years

Level(s): ☐ Elementary ☐ Intermediate ☐ High School
(check all that apply)

4. What was the duration of your administrator training program?

5. How many years have you worked as an administrator for the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE)?

6. What is your current position and the level that you work in?

Appendix F

Individual Interview Questions

- 1) Please state your name and your position.
- 2) Please describe a significant school crisis that you were responsible for making decisions and providing leadership for, during and in its aftermath, in your capacity as a school leader. Include the year and timeframe of this crisis.
- 3) What factors influenced your decision-making and leadership during and in the aftermath of the crisis you described?
- 4) Did you implement a decision-making model/process during and in the aftermath of the crisis? If so, please describe the model/process and share how it helped you. If not, do you feel that not having one hindered you?
- 5) Describe any ethical dilemmas you experienced during and in the aftermath of the crisis and how these dilemmas affected your decision-making and leadership.
- 6) In what ways, if any, did school community members' influence or impact your decision-making and leadership during and in the aftermath of the crisis?
Students:
Staff:
Parents:
Community Members:
- 7) How did you feel about the involvement of these school community members and why?
- 8) Describe your challenges and strengths as a school leader when making decisions and leading during and in the aftermath of the crisis.
- 9) At the time, how did you feel about your preparedness and ability as a school leader to handle the crisis and why?
- 10) Describe any assistance that you received with making decisions and leading during and in the aftermath of the crisis, from other Hawaii Department of Education (DOE) personnel outside of the school level or other agencies.
- 11) Describe any assistance from the Hawaii Department of Education or other agencies that you would have liked to have had available during and in the aftermath of the crisis.
- 12) Describe any training that you had at any time in your career in the area of crisis management prior to the crisis.

13) In retrospect, how do you feel about your preparedness and ability as a school leader to have handled the crisis and why?

14) Explain why you do or do not believe that your decision-making and leadership were effective during and in the aftermath of the crisis.

15) Describe how your overall experience with this crisis affected you professionally, immediately after the crisis, and how it impacts you now?

Appendix G

School/Office-Specific Emergency Plan Evaluation Form

School: _____

School Specific Plans

The following emergencies & topics (**Bold**) should be addressed in the school specific plans:

Each italicized area under the emergencies & topics (**Bold**) should be included under each specific area.

_____ **General Responsibilities**

_____ *Definition of the emergency* _____ *Notification procedures*

_____ *Description or signs of an individual that could lead to possible emergency*

_____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*

_____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

_____ *Incident Command System Organization*

_____ *Command Center (need phone line or communication capability)*

_____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

_____ *Procedures to manage disable people*

_____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

_____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*

_____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* _____ *Supervision & area of responsibility*

_____ *Routes & Assembly Maps* _____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*

* _____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Note: an (X) next to an item means that it is suggested that this needs to be addressed in the school specific plan

_____ **Crisis Team Members/Chain of Command/Phone Numbers (note: do not use names in the plan's main body to avoid editing plans each SY; use role titles)**

_____ *Notification procedures*

_____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

_____ *Incident Command System Organization*

_____ *Command Center (need phone line or communication capability)*

_____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

_____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*

_____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* _____ *Supervision & area of responsibility*

_____ *Routes & Assembly Maps*

_____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Staff Responsibilities

- ☐ *Notification Procedures*
- ☐ *Description or signs of an individual that could lead to possible emergency*
- ☐ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ☐ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ☐ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ☐ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ☐ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ☐ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* ☐ *Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ☐ *Routes & Assembly Maps* ☐ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ☐ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Warning Notifications & Signals – What they mean

- ☐ *Notification procedures*
- ☐ *Role/Responsibility of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ☐ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

Bomb Threats

- ☐ *Notification procedures*
- ☐ *Role/Responsibility of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ☐ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ☐ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ☐ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ☐ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ☐ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* ☐ *Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ☐ *Routes & Assembly Maps* ☐ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ☐ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Weapons

- ☐ *Notification procedures*
- ☐ *Description or signs of an individual that could lead to possible emergency*
- ☐ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ☐ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ☐ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ☐ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ☐ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ☐ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ☐ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking*
- ☐ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ☐ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

_____ **Tornado/Water spout**

_____ *Notification procedures*

_____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

_____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

_____ *Procedures to manage disable people*

_____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

_____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*

_____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking _____ Supervision & area of responsibility*

_____ *Routes & Assembly Maps _____ Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*

_____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

_____ **Locally Generated Tsunami (only in inundation zone)**

_____ *Notification procedures*

_____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

_____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

_____ *Procedures to manage disable people*

_____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

_____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*

_____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking _____ Supervision & area of responsibility*

_____ *Routes & Assembly Maps _____ Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*

_____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

_____ **Earthquake**

_____ *Notification procedures*

_____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

_____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

_____ *Procedures to manage disable people*

_____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*

_____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*

_____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking _____ Supervision & area of responsibility*

_____ *Routes & Assembly Maps _____ Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*

_____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

_____ **Hazardous Materials Incident**

_____ *Definition of the emergency _____ Notification procedures*

_____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*

_____ *Role/Responsibility of the School Crisis Response Team Members*

____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____ Supervision & area of responsibility*
____ *Routes & Assembly Maps ____ Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Fire

____ *Notification procedures*
____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____ Supervision & area of responsibility*
____ *Routes & Assembly Maps ____ Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Suicide/Attempt (signs exhibited by the individual)

____ *Notification procedures*
____ *Description or signs of an individual that could lead to possible emergency*
____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Serious Injury/Death

____ *Notification procedures*
____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

Assaults/Fights

- ___ *Notification procedures*
- ___ *Description or signs of an individual that could lead to possible emergency*
- ___ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ___ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ___ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ___ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ___ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ___ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ___ *Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ___ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ___ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

___ **Campus Disturbance/Riot**

- ___ *Notification procedures*
- ___ *Description or signs of an individual/s that could lead to possible emergency*
- ___ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ___ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ___ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ___ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ___ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ___ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ___ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* ___ *Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ___ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ___ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

___ **Intruder/Hostage**

- ___ *Notification procedures*
- ___ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ___ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ___ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ___ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ___ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ___ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ___ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking* ___ *Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ___ *Routes & Assembly Maps* ___ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ___ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

___ **Lock-Down Procedures**

- ___ *Definition of the emergency* ___ *Notification procedures*
- ___ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ___ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

- ____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

____ **Shelter-In-Place**

- ____ *Definition of the emergency ____Notification procedures*
- ____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ____ *Routes & Assembly Maps ____Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

____ **Evacuation/Second Field Evacuation (family reunification areas)**

- ____ *Definition of emergency ____Notification procedures*
- ____ *What to do to alleviate/address possible emergency*
- ____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

____ **Family Reunification Area**

____ *Could be **Second Field Evacuation Area***

- ____ *Area divided to station parents, counselors, media, victims, command area and victims*
- ____ *Procedures to reunite siblings, parents and students away from media & public.*
- ____ *Roles/Responsibilities of School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ____ *Communication procedures*
- ____ *Security assignments*

____ **Emergency Closure of School (do not allow parents to park; sign out process; release list at registration)**

- ____ *Definition of emergency ____Notification procedures*
- ____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*

- ____ *Procedures to manage disable people*
- ____ *Procedures if emergency occurs before school, during recess & after school*
- ____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ____ *Backup Procedures/Rechecking ____ Supervision & area of responsibility*
- ____ *Accounting for all students, staff, visitors, etc.*
- ____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

____ **Media Procedures**

- ____ *Role/Responsibilities of the School Crisis Response Team Members*
- ____ *Command Center (need phone line or communication capability)*
- ____ *Procedures for administration, Staff, Teachers, Students, Crisis Team (what not to do & what to do)*
- ____ *Communication between school personnel during the emergency period*
- ____ *Post Crisis Procedures (communication, debriefing, post trauma counseling, clean up, etc.)*

____ **Employee Safety**

- ____ *Employee Screening*
- ____ ***Room Perimeter and Area Protection and Control***
- ____ ***Visitor Protocol and Signage***
- ____ ***Personnel Identification and Control***
- ____ ***Authorization for Access to Area***
- ____ ***Protective Lighting***
- ____ ***Material Control***
- ____ ***Early Arrivals and Late Departures***
- ____ ***Evacuation and Refuge***
- ____ ***Communication***

Comments: